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An Iraqi soldier is helped by U.S. troops from Company C, 203rd Forward Support Battalion, after a car bomb exploded Wednesday in Baqouba, Iraq. Four Iraqi soldiers were killed.

CHARLIE COON/Stars and Stripes

Bomber targets Iraqi troops near U.S. bases in Baqouba

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is back with
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Rob Halford

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Command
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copy of Stars
and Stripes.



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States

Fla. right-to-die case: The husband of a brain-damaged woman accused Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and state legislators of pandering to voters by trying to pass legislation preventing the removal of her feeding tube.

Michael Schiavo leveled the accusations Tuesday in an interview for ABC's "Nightline" after state House and Senate committees endorsed bills aimed at preventing removal of Terri Schiavo's feeding tube. A judge has scheduled the removal for Friday.

W.Va. barge accident: The Coast Guard has disciplined a towboat captain found to have misjudged Ohio River currents during a January flood, leading to a barge accident that closed 42 miles of the waterway in West Virginia for nearly two weeks.

In an investigative report obtained by The Associated Press, the Coast Guard said it warned of high and fast-moving water the day before the Jan. 6 accident but the tow captain "failed to request an assist tow during severe weather conditions and he failed to ensure his tow and vessel was adequate given the river conditions."

Based on its investigation, the Coast Guard suspended Victor A. Baker's merchant mariners license for one month and placed him on two months' probation. Baker was also required to attend refresher courses in navigation and pilot house management.

Pinochet banking help: Not just Riggs Bank, but eight others including Citigroup and Bank of America — helped former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and members of his family build a secret network of accounts to conceal his wealth, Senate investigators have found.

In a report released Tuesday, the investigators charged that Riggs's dealings with Pinochet were far more extensive and long-standing than had been known.

University of Colo. grants: A philanthropic organization that has given the University of Colorado nearly \$2 million in the past three years has delayed fulfilling grant requests this year, in part because of the school's recent scandals, the organization's president said.

Some board members were concerned about problems facing the university, including the investigation of a professor who compared some Sept. 11, 2001, victims to a Nazi, the football recruiting scandal and questions about the finances of the university's fund-raising arm. Others wanted to look at the success of previous grants.

World

Madrid train bombing: Lawmakers probing the Madrid, Spain, train bombing on Wednesday rejected a request to hear more testimony and instead set an April 19 deadline for draft proposals that would be included in a final report on Spain's worst terrorist attack.

The conservative Popular Party, which was in power at the time of the attack March 11, 2004, has been pressing for the 16-member panel to hear from more police and other witnesses, but the panel said no on Wednesday.

Oil production: Driven by fears of a winter supply crunch at year's end, OPEC oil ministers agreed Wednesday to immediately authorize the pumping of an extra half-million barrels of oil a day and to ap-



Israel protester lawsuit: Rachel Corrie, left, 23, from Olympia, Wash., uses a loudspeaker as she stands between an Israeli bulldozer and a Palestinian physician's house in the Gaza Strip town of Rafah on March 16, 2003. The parents of Corrie, who was killed while trying to prevent the demolition of the Palestinian home, is suing Caterpillar Inc., the company that made the bulldozer. The federal lawsuit, which was filed Tuesday, alleges that Caterpillar violated international and state law by providing specially designed bulldozers to Israeli Defense Forces that it knew would be used to demolish homes and endanger people.

prove a similar boost later if prices do not fall.

The decision to look to winter and raise the OPEC production quota just ahead of the northern hemisphere springtime — when demand normally falls — was unusual. It reflected concern about OPEC's ability to influence a stubbornly bullish market that has driven prices of benchmark light crude up about 25 percent this year alone.

Kyrgyzstan elections: The U.S. ambassador to Kyrgyzstan criticized the ex-Soviet republic's government on Wednesday for failing to ensure free elections, and opposition supporters continued to rally across the country against alleged voting fraud.

Ambassador Stephen Young said Sunday's runoff parliamentary elections and the original vote on Feb. 27 were marred by harassment of independent media, government interference in the campaign process, media bias in favor of pro-government candidates and the disqualification of opposition candidates.

Balkans war crimes: Macedonian authorities Wednesday handed over a war crimes suspect to the custody of a U.N. tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, which investigates war crimes in the Balkans.

Johan Tarculovsky, 30, a senior police officer, has been charged with three counts of murder, cruel treatment and wanton destruction for an August 2001 raid on the village of Ljubotri, just outside Skopje.

Pavlovski said Tarculovsky was flown directly to The Hague from Skopje. Macedonian authorities arrested Tarculovsky on Monday in Skopje.

U.N. sex abuse claims: As the United Nations confronts claims of sex abuse on peacekeeping missions worldwide, officials say punishing soldiers may be easier than punishing civilians working for the world body.

Under current rules, soldiers accused of wrongdoing are sent home and punishment is left to their own governments who often do nothing, while civilians in similar circumstances can be sent home or face U.N. disciplinary action.

While much of the effort to stop sexual misconduct has focused on new policies for the 60,000 peacekeeping troops in 16 missions across the globe, United Nations deployments also have about 10,000 foreign civilians and civilian police who fall outside military rules.

Pakistan rape: Pakistani authorities said on Wednesday that they have posted more

than two dozen police officers outside a woman's home to guard her after a court freed four of the six men convicted of raping her — an attack ordered by a village council as punishment for her brother's alleged misdeeds.

The four men walked out of a high-security jail nearly three years after being convicted of raping 33-year-old Mukhtar Mai. The four men have been told "to stay away from Mukhtar Mai's house," Iqbal said.

Pope's health: Pope John Paul II made a surprise appearance Wednesday at an open window of his apartment overlooking St. Peter's Square in Vatican City, his first in public since being released from the hospital after throat surgery to ease a breathing crisis.

The 84-year-old pontiff appeared briefly to pilgrims who had gathered on the square on a day when the pope typically greets the faithful in a weekly public audience. He waved and made the sign of the cross, blessing several thousand pilgrims on the square on a mild March day.

He lingered just a minute at the window and did not address the crowd, which cheered as John Paul came into view.

Secret listening device: A U.N. watchdog has launched an investigation into the discovery of a secret listening device at the global body's European headquarters, a senior official said Tuesday.

The listening device was found last year during renovation work in a room known as the Salon Francis where it could have been used to eavesdrop on private conversations.

Afghan airliner recovery: An Afghan soldier was killed and another wounded when they triggered a land mine while recovering bodies from an airliner that slammed into a mountain in the nation's worst-ever air crash, officials said Wednesday.

Deep snow and fear of old ordnance has hampered efforts to retrieve the remains of the 105-ton plane when the Boeing 737 crashed east of the capital, Kabul, during a snowstorm near an old military observation post. The mine exploded on Tuesday about 400 yards from a landing zone that had earlier been checked by a de-mining team, NATO's security force in Afghanistan said.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Pope John Paul II

Iraq parliament opens amid nearby bombings

BY RAWYA RAGEH
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's first freely elected parliament in half a century began its opening session Wednesday after a series of explosions targeted the gathering.

The parliament's 275 members, elected during Jan. 30 balloting, convened in an auditorium amid tight security in the heavily guarded Green Zone, with U.S. helicopter gunships hovering overhead.

Minutes before the assembly convened, at least a half-dozen explosions detonated a few hundred yards away. The U.S. military said two mortar rounds landed inside the zone but caused no injuries.

After Wednesday's session ended, another mortar shell hit an empty building in central Baghdad's Karradah neighborhood, setting the two-story structure on fire, police and witnesses said. There were no reports of injuries.

The lawmakers opened with a reading of verses from the Quran.

Iraq Chief Justice Muthall al Mahmood then administered the oath to the assembled deputies.

"It is a great day in Iraqi history that its elected representatives meet," said Faud Masoum, a Kurdish delegate.

"This day coincides with a painful memory that has many meanings. ... Today, on this occasion, we celebrate the inauguration of parliament after the fall of this regime."

Wednesday marked the anniversary of the Saddam Hussein-ordered chemical attack in 1988 on the northern Kurdish town of Halabja, an attack that killed 5,000 people.

Iraqi leaders have not yet agreed on a coalition government, and the leader of the Shiite-dominated United Iraqi Alliance, cleric Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, said his alliance hoped to "form a government whose motto is to serve the Iraqi people, a government of national unity and reconciliation."

"A government that can root out violence and set a trial for Saddam and the elements of his regime," Hakim said in a speech that wove in and out of prayer. He said a government led by the alliance would also try "to achieve the independence of Iraq and put an end to the role of multinational forces in Iraq."

Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish leader who will probably become Iraq's next president, said deputies "all have a duty to achieve real national unity."

"Iraq is facing tough times due to the con-



Iraq's National Assembly, the country's first freely elected parliament in half a century, convenes in Baghdad on Wednesday. The gathering marks a major milestone on the road to forming a new government in the insurgent-wracked country.

tinuation of criminal terror crimes," he said. "Al-Qaida is waging a war of extermination on Kurds and Shiites."

On Tuesday, Shiite Muslim officials said they failed to reach final agreement in talks with the Kurds — who are mostly Sunni Muslim but secular — and the Sunni Arabs.

Ali al-Dabagh, a member of the Shiite clergy-dominated United Iraqi Alliance, which won the most seats in the elections, said Tuesday that Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni Arab politicians would meet after the deputies are sworn in "to finalize things. We need two to three days to announce an agreement."

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Tuesday at least 1,156 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,156 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department. The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,378 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 1,047 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A servicemember was killed while on patrol early Tuesday when an explosive detonated.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Joshua L. Torrence, 20, Lexington, S.C.; killed Monday in Iraq's Anbar province; assigned to 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Bush: No timetable to leave Iraq

BY TERENCE HUNT
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush said Wednesday he understands the desire of U.S. coalition partners to withdraw troops from Iraq, but he declined to set a timetable for bringing American forces home and said he hoped others would also say the course.

"Our troops will come home when Iraq is capable of defending herself," Bush told reporters.

Bush spoke a day after Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announced plans to start drawing down his country's 3,000-strong contingent in Iraq, amid widespread anger over the recent killing of an Italian officer by U.S. troops.

Some 14 nations have with-

drawn troops since the U.S.-led March 2003 invasion of Iraq.

In a news conference at the White House, Bush said he had spoken by telephone to Berlusconi earlier in the day and they talked about both Iraq and Bush's recommendation of Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz to become head of the World Bank.

"He wanted me to know that there was no change in his policy, that, in fact, any withdrawals would be done in consultation with allies and would be done depending upon the ability of Iraqis to defend themselves," Bush said.

Bush shrugged off a question about detainees being sent by the United States back to their home countries, where they could be tortured.

"The United States must make

sure we protect our people and our friends from attack. One way to do so is arrest people and send them back" to their home countries, he said. "We seek assurances that no one will be tortured."

On Iraq, Bush said he understood the desire of countries to bring their troops home. "What you're going to find is that countries will be willing, anxious" to leave — but only when Iraqi police and security forces are capable of taking over the work now done by coalition forces.

He denied that what the administration has called the "coalition of the willing" was crumbling.

Bush also praised Iraq for Wednesday's opening session of the country's first freely elected parliament in half a century.

Bush called the meeting "a bright moment" in Iraq's history.



At a news conference Wednesday, President Bush said U.S. troops wouldn't be withdrawn from Iraq until the country is ready to defend itself.

House approves \$81.4B war-spending package

BY LIZ SIDOTI
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House of Representatives on Wednesday approved an \$81.4 billion package for combat and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, which would push the total cost of the war beyond \$300 billion.

By a 388-43 vote, the House gave President Bush most of the money he had requested, with strong support from both Republicans and Democrats. The Senate will consider its version in April.

The legislation is the fifth emergency spending plan Bush has sent to Congress for wars since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

In a setback for the White House, the House trimmed president's request for Afghan reconstruction projects and State Department programs and prohibited any money in the bill from being used to build a sprawling U.S. embassy in Baghdad, despite intense lobbying by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The moves sent a signal to the president that while lawmakers would give troops what they needed, emergency spending packages for the war should only be used to pay for urgent matters.

"The reason for this supplemental is to provide as quickly as possible money flows in support of our troops," Rep. Jerry Lewis, the

chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said in urging passage.

The White House said in a statement that while it supports the bill as a whole, the president is concerned that the legislation does not adequately pay for matters deemed urgent by the administration, including the State Department programs.

U.S. diplomatic officials in Iraq currently are working out of one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces and the White House said a fortified U.S. embassy in Iraq is needed immediately.

"Postponing construction will delay moving our people into more safe, secure and functional facilities," the White House said.

Blast outside U.S. bases kills four Iraqis

No Americans were wounded in car bombing

BY CHARLIE COON
Stars and Stripes

BAQOUBA, Iraq — Four Iraqi soldiers were killed and another 17 wounded Wednesday when a car bomb exploded at a checkpoint outside the gates of Forward Operating Bases Warhorse and Scunior.

Some U.S. troops first thought the explosion was a planned blast to destroy enemy bombs. But the blast wasn't planned, at least not by the U.S. soldiers, who were soon scrambling to save their comrades in the Iraqi army.

"They're just here to do their jobs, to help," said Sgt. Charles Graham. "To me, losing one of them is like losing one of us."

Soldiers from Graham's unit, the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armored Regiment, arrived on the scene from Scunior as Iraqi soldiers piled the casualties into the backs of their white Toyota pickups. The casualties were driven to the gate at FOB Warhorse and met by U.S. medics and combat ambulances from Warhorse's clinic.

"It was pretty messy," said Graham, whose unit had performed missions with the same group of Iraqi soldiers. "A lot of guys were injured by shrapnel. There was a lot of blood, a lot of blood."

All of the casualties were members of the 20th Iraqi Army Battalion. There was no immediate word if there were civilian casualties. No U.S. soldiers were wounded.

Graham's soldiers secured the scene, and the frantic Iraqis were met at Warhorse's gate by medics from Company C, 203rd Forward Support Battalion. In the minutes after the 4:43 a.m. blast, the clinic received radio reports that four were wounded, then eight, nine and 16. It went more help as the casualty estimate rose.



Above: A wounded Iraqi soldier is treated by medics from Company C, 203rd Forward Support Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division, after a car bomb exploded Wednesday morning in Baqouba, Iraq. The car bomb, which detonated at a checkpoint manned by Iraqi army soldiers, killed four of the soldiers and wounded 17.

Left: A wounded Iraqi soldier is carried on a stretcher by American medics.

PHOTOS BY CHARLIE COON
Stars and Stripes

At the gate, the medics sifted through the carnage.

"The first two guys I saw were dead," said Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Louis. "We moved them out of the way to get to the other guys."

"We tried to get the most critical guys [to the clinic first]," he said.

Once at the clinic, called the Teal Medical Facility, the wounded were carried on stretchers from the ambulances into the clinic

and its waiting team.

Others weren't so lucky.

Besides the two Iraqi soldiers who died at the scene, one was declared dead at the front gate of Warhorse and the fourth died on the operating table, according to Dr. (Maj.) Andy Magnet, brigade surgeon for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, which is based at FOB Warhorse.

In addition to those killed, eight Iraqi soldiers were evacuated for

treatment to the 31st Combat Support Hospital at Logistics Support Area Anaconda about 30 miles to the west. Eight Iraqi soldiers were treated and returned to duty. One was scheduled to stay overnight at the Warhorse clinic.

Inside the clinic, the wounded were placed on treatment tables in rows and treated by U.S. medics. Others sat stunned in chairs a few feet away in the makeshift waiting room, one resting his han-

"This incident will make us more strong. We will do our best to avenge our peaceful soldiers."

Maj. Adnan Gassan
Iraqi soldier

daged head on a blood-stained hand.

The blast upset what had been a lull in violence for the past several weeks for the 42nd Infantry Division's Task Force Liberty, which has been helping the Iraqis seat new local governments and begin reconstruction projects in north-central Iraq.

A late-arriving Iraqi soldier stormed into the clinic, had a quick word with a comatose, then turned and wailed with grief, beating his head with his fist as he stormed back outside crying. His brother had been one of those killed.

According to Maj. Adnan Gassan, one of the Iraqis in charge, the car bomber drove past him at the checkpoint before detonating his blast. The driver, Gassan said, was a boy who appeared to be 13 or 14 years old.

All four of those who died were married with children, Gassan said.

"They [Iraqi soldiers] are people who just want to help," Gassan said through an interpreter. "They just want to stabilize the situation [in the province of] Diyala," of which Baqouba is the capital.

"This incident will make us more strong," he added as a nearby U.S. soldier mopped blood drops off the clinic's floor. "We will do our best to avenge our peaceful soldiers. We will do our best to follow and capture the terrorists."

"We know they will be defeated."

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U.S. soldier dies in mine explosion in Afghanistan

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM
The Associated Press Writer

KABUL, Afghanistan — A land mine killed a U.S. soldier western Afghanistan, the American military said Wednesday, even as the top U.S. general insisted that security in the war-ravaged country was "exceptionally good."

News of the explosion came as Gen. Richard Myers said the United States is considering putting long-term bases in Afghanistan as it repositions its forces worldwide.

The mine hit a group of U.S. military police on Tuesday near an American base in Shindand, close to the Iranian border, kill-

Gen. Richard Myers has yet to advise President Bush on whether to seek permanent American bases on Afghan soil.

ing one soldier and injuring four more, the military said in a statement.

One of the wounded suffered a severe back injury, another was in stable condition and two were treated and returned to duty, it said. None of the soldiers were identified in the statement.

Taliban-led militants continue to mount regular attacks on U.S. and Afghan forces in Afghanistan, mainly in the south and east, though American commanders claim that the former ruling militia is a fading force.

The last American combat fatality occurred Jan. 3, when militants detonated two bombs and opened fire on American troops in eastern Kunar province, killing

one soldier.

Myers, the visiting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that Afghanistan remained "a target" for al-Qaida and that a hard core of Taliban militants were likely to fight on.

But he also said the Taliban were "essentially in disarray" since failing to disrupt landmark presidential elections last year.

"Security is very good throughout the country, exceptionally good," Myers told reporters at Kabul airport after talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U.S. commanders here. A reconciliation drive for "non-criminal" Taliban could further weaken the militia, Myers said.

Myers said he had yet to advise President Bush on whether to seek permanent American bases on Afghan soil.

"But clearly we've developed good relationships and good partnerships in this part of the world, not only in Afghanistan," Myers said at a news conference, also mentioning existing U.S. bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The Afghan government has said it is seeking a "strategic partnership" with the United States spanning economic and political ties as well as the military. It has yet to say whether that would include permanent American bases in a country neighboring Iran, Pakistan and oil-rich Central Asia.

Three years after driving out the Taliban for harboring al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, the American military has about 17,000 troops in Afghanistan and operates air bases at Bagram, north of Kabul, Kandahar in the south and Jalalabad in the east.



Myers

Italy becomes latest nation leaving Iraq

Berlusconi decision to withdraw follows shooting of journalist, agent

BY WILLIAM J. KOLE

The Associated Press

ROME — Italy's prime minister announced plans to start drawing down his country's 3,000-strong contingent in Iraq in September, putting a fresh crack in President Bush's crumbling coalition. Bulgaria also called for a partial withdrawal, and Ukraine welcomed home its first wave of returning troops.

The moves come on top of the withdrawal of more than a dozen countries over the last year and could complicate efforts to keep the peace while Iraq's new government builds up police and military units capable of taking over from foreign forces.

Two years after the U.S.-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein, the coalition is unraveling amid mounting casualties and kidnappings that have stoked anti-war sentiment and sapped leaders' resolve to keep troops in harm's way.

Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, who confirmed he would seek re-election next year, alluded to the rising public discontent and said he had spoken with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, another strong Washington ally. "We need to construct a precise exit strategy, also because our public's opinions expect this communication and we agree to talk about it soon."

"Starting with the month of September, we would like to proceed with a gradual reduction of our

soldiers," Berlusconi said on a state TV talk show that lasted into early Wednesday. He added that the withdrawal would be tied to the Iraqis' ability to secure the country.

Italy's government, a staunch U.S. ally, had vowed to stay despite suffering 21 casualties and enduring fierce public opposition that escalated this month after U.S. soldiers in Baghdad fatally shot an Italian intelligence agent escorting a newly freed hostage.

Thirty-eight countries have provided troops in Iraq at one point or another. But 14 nations have permanently withdrawn since the March 2003 invasion, and today's coalition stands at 24. Excluding U.S. forces, there are 22,750 foreign soldiers still in Iraq.

"Obviously, every country will make their own decisions about what they can continue to contribute or contribute in the future when it comes to helping the Iraqi people," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Tuesday.

The scramble to get out has taken the multinational force from a high of about 300,000 soldiers in the region early in 2003 to 172,750 and falling. About 150,000 U.S. troops shoulder the bulk of the responsibility and suffer the most casualties.

A Pentagon spokesman, Lt. Col. Barry Venable, said the decisions by some nations to reduce or end their presence in Iraq was not a threat to security. "The coalition is strong," he said.

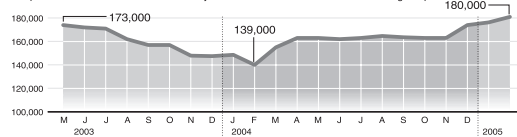


British troops maintain security Monday in central Basra, Iraq, with Iraq on the brink of forming a coalition government as its first democratically elected parliament in modern history, many hope the stage will be set for eventual foreign military withdrawal. Italy has announced the withdrawal of its troops from the country, starting in September.

AP

Coalition troop strength

As anti-war sentiment mounts, more nations are dropping out of U.S.-led coalition in Iraq. Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi has announced that Italy's 3,000-strong contingent will leave Iraq in September. Bulgaria also called for a partial withdrawal and Ukraine recently welcomed home its first wave of returning troops.



SOURCES: Associated Press reporting; Brookings Institution; U.S. Census Bureau

Carrie Osgood • AP

Americans: Iraq better off, but war not worth fighting

BY DAN BALZ
AND RICHARD MORIN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Two years after President Bush led the country into war with Iraq, Americans appear to be of two minds about the situation in the Middle East: A majority say they believe Iraqis are better off today than they were before the conflict began — but they also say the war was not worth fighting in the first place, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News Poll.

The January elections in Iraq have clearly helped to shift public opinion in a positive direction about the future of Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, with a clear majority of Americans (56 percent) saying they are now confident that Iraq's leaders will be able to create a stable government there, a dramatic turnaround since just before the election. The poll also shows that more Americans believe the war has improved the chances of democracy spreading in the Middle East than who say it has diminished those prospects.

Despite the optimism about the

Iraqis happy with new direction, poll says

Stars and Stripes

More Iraqis believe their country is headed in the right direction and fewer think it's going wrong than at any time since the U.S. invasion two years ago, according to a new poll.

The poll, by the International Republican Institute, to have been made public Wednesday, also found that nearly half of Iraqis believe that religion has a special role to play in government, USA Today reported in its Wednesday editions.

The survey of 1,967 Iraqis was conducted Feb. 27-March 5, after Iraq held its first free elec-

tions in half a century in January, USA Today reported. According to the poll, 62 percent say the country is headed in the right direction and 23 percent say it is headed in the wrong direction.

That is the widest spread recorded in seven polls by the group, Stuart Russell, IRI director of operations for Iraq, told the newspaper. In September, 45 percent of Iraqis thought the country was headed in the wrong direction and 42 percent thought it was headed in the right direction. The IRI is a non-partisan, U.S. taxpayer-funded group that promotes democracy abroad.

of U.S. casualties, including more than 1,500 deaths, is an unacceptable price to pay there.

The mixed assessment of the situation in Iraq comes near the second anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which offers a benchmark for measuring the shifts in public opinion that have

occurred since Bush launched the war in the face of opposition from much of the rest of the world.

Along with judgments about the war in Iraq, the poll found little appetite for military action against other states Bush has targeted for criticism, including Iran

and North Korea. But with Iraq moving toward greater self-governance, Bush does not appear to be under great pressure to remove U.S. forces immediately — despite criticism of how he has handled the situation there.

Foreign policy experts said they found the seemingly conflicting views about the past and the future consistent with longstanding attitudes about the appropriate use of U.S. military force. For starters, Americans rank promoting democracy abroad at or near the bottom of acceptable reasons for using military force.

"People just think this is not our mission, that we should not be the democracy policemen," said James Steinberg, vice president and director of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution.

"Even though they think they [the Iraqis] are better off, they're leery about the U.S. going out and doing these things."

The poll was conducted by telephone March 10-13 among 1,001 randomly selected adults nationwide. Margin of sampling error for overall results is plus or minus three percentage points.

Assistant polling director Claudia Deane contributed to this report.

Report: 108 prisoners died in U.S. custody

Investigations in Afghanistan and Iraq point to abuse by American personnel

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — At least 108 people have died in American custody in Iraq and Afghanistan, most of them violently, according to government data provided to The Associated Press. Roughly a quarter of those deaths have been investigated as possible abuse by U.S. personnel.

The figure, far higher than any previously disclosed, includes cases investigated by the Army, Navy, CIA and Justice Department.

Some 65,000 prisoners have been taken during the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, although most have been freed.

The Pentagon has never provided comprehensive information on how many prisoners taken during the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have died, and the 108 figure is based on information supplied by Army, Navy and other government officials.

It includes deaths attributed to natural causes.

To human rights groups, the deaths form a clear pattern.

"Despite the military's own reports of deaths and abuses of detainees in U.S. custody, it is astonishing that our government can still pretend that what is happening is the work of a few rogue soldiers," said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero. "No one at the highest levels of our government has yet been held accountable for the torture and abuse, and that is unacceptable."

To the Pentagon, each death is a distinct case, meriting an investigation but not attributable to any single faulty military policy. Pentagon officials point to a number of

military investigations which found that no policy condoned abuse.

Defense Department spokesman Lt. Col. John Skinner said the military has taken steps to reduce the chance of violent uprisings at its prisons and the use of excessive force by soldiers, and also has improved the health care available to prisoners.

"The military has dramatically improved detention operations, everything from increased oversight and improved facilities to expanded training and the availability of state-of-the-art medical care," he said in a statement.

Documents raise fresh concerns of abuse by SEALs

BY SETH HETTESHA

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Newly released Army documents suggest that soldiers at a makeshift Iraqi detention camp suspected that detainees were being mistreated by a Navy SEAL team whose members were photographed posing with bloodied prisoners.

Two Army interrogators said they were concerned about the way members of SEAL Team Five were treating prisoners, according to documents obtained by the American Civil Liberties

Union. Some of the prisoners brought in by the SEALs "appeared to be very severely beaten," an unnamed Army staff sergeant told investigators last year.

The statements were among hundreds of pages of documents about Iraqi prisoner abuses the ACLU made public last week after obtaining them through the Freedom of Information Act.

Members of SEAL Team Five, based in Coronado, appear in a series of images found last year by The Associated Press that show the immediate aftermath of

raids on civilian homes. It was unclear whether the photos and the Army reports involved the same men.

There are more than 100 men in SEAL Team Five.

"When we would inquire about their wounds, the SEALs/TF-20 members would provide a general 'they resisted' response," according to a sworn statement by the unnamed staff sergeant with the 1st Engineer Battalion at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

The Navy has launched an investigation into the photos of SEAL Team Five. One image

shows a detainee lying on his back with a boot on his chest. Another shows a prisoner with an automatic weapon pointed at his head and a gloved thumb jabbed into his throat.

In several photos, grinning SEALs take turns sitting or lying atop what appear to be three hooded and handcuffed men in the bed of a pickup truck.

A report into the photos was completed in January, but the officer leading the investigation, SEAL Capt. James W. O'Connell, was traveling and was unable to review the report for several weeks.

Six unnamed Navy SEALs and two of their wives filed a lawsuit against the AP over the photos in December, claiming that the images and an accompanying article published Dec. 3 showed them in a false light.

They seek unspecified damages.

The AP has not yet been served with the complaint.

"We haven't gotten any papers and are beginning to wonder whether they intend to proceed," said Dave Tomlin, the news cooperative's assistant general counsel.

Charged in son's death

RALEIGH, N.C. — A soldier due back from Iraq this month faces a charge of killing his son, who died nearly three years after being violently shaken, authorities said.

Staff Sgt. Jessie L. Ullom, 24, had pleaded guilty to felony child abuse one year ago and was placed on probation for two years.

Then, in December, his son, Christian Zachary Norris, died of lingering complications of shaken baby syndrome. He died about two weeks before his third birthday. Ullom, of the 82nd Airborne Division, was indicted Monday on a charge of involuntary manslaughter.

Ullom has spent most of the past three years overseas, and his company is scheduled to return by month's end, said Maj. Amy Hannah, a spokeswoman for the 82nd Airborne.

Captain denies charges

FORT CARSON, Colorado — An Army captain accused of terrorizing an Iraqi town under his supervision testified that he never threatened to shoot one of his men for refusing to fire at a detainee and never threatened Iraqi civilians with his pistol.

Capt. Shawn L. Martin's court-martial opened Monday with witnesses saying he ruled like a tyrant over Ar Rutbah, a community of 25,000 in Iraq's western desert, kicking and screaming at civilian detainees and pointing a pistol at them. The alleged tracks took place from May to July 2003, when Martin was the senior officer in the city.

From The Associated Press

GI gets 45 days for forcing Iraqis into river

Platoon leader apologizes in court for fatal Tigris incident

BY ANGELA K. BROWN

The Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — An Army platoon leader apologized for his role in forcing three Iraqi civilians into the Tigris River, saying his poor decisions "adversely affected U.S.-Iraqi trust during critical times of reconstruction."

Army 1st Lt. Jack Saville, 25, was sentenced to 45 days in a military prison Tuesday, as well as ordered to forfeit \$2,000 of his \$3,270 monthly pay for six months.

Prosecutors had recommended Saville, who chose a nonjury trial, be discharged from the Army.

Reading from a statement, the West Point graduate said he has learned from his mistakes and has been forgiven by God.

"I hope to use these experiences for greater good," Saville said.

Saville pleaded guilty Monday to assault and other crimes for forcing two curfew violators into the river at gunpoint in January 2004 near Samarra. One of the men allegedly drowned.

Saville was convicted Tuesday of a lesser assault charge for doing nothing to stop another Iraqi man from being forced into the river near Balad in December 2003.

The charges carried a maximum 9½-year sentence; however, a plea deal capped the sentence at 15 months. That part of the agreement was kept secret so military judge Col. Theodore Dixon would not be influenced, Army officials said.

Earlier Tuesday, former soldier Terry Bowman testified that before the Balad incident, Saville laughed and said it was part of a bet with another platoon over who would do such a thing first.

The actual orders, however, were given by Saville's co-defendant, Staff Sgt. Tracy Perkins.

Perkins was acquitted in January of manslaughter in the Samarra incident, but convicted of assault and obstruction of justice in both incidents. He was sentenced to six months.

In the Samarra incident, Saville ordered his soldiers to throw civilians Zaidoun and Marwan Hassoun into the river at gunpoint.

Saville also had been charged with manslaughter in Zaidoun Hassoun's reported death, but that charge — along with counts of conspiracy and lying to investigators — was dropped in the plea deal.

Defense lawyers maintain Zaidoun Hassoun survived, although defense attorney Frank Spinner on Tuesday said he didn't know why the body purported to be his was not exhumed. A judge in December granted Spinner's request for an exhumation and autopsy.

Spinner, who had asked the judge to consider Saville's West Point case an error in Iraq, said he "can't complain about the sentence."

"I asked the judge to use wisdom and to provide an expansive interpretation of Army values," he said.

Prosecutors declined to comment.

Saville and Perkins are part of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team out of Fort Carson, Colo., which is part of the 4th Infantry Division based at Fort Hood.

Monday's deal included an agreement by Saville to testify against a higher-ranking officer accused of ordering him and other soldiers to execute certain Iraqi suspects if they caught them.



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jack Saville arrives Tuesday at the Lawrence Williams Justice Center with his wife, Ashley, on the second day of his court-martial at Fort Hood, Texas. Saville faced charges in the forcing of two Iraqis into the Tigris River in Iraq.

Hospital ship leaves Aceh province



PAUL G. SCHERMAN/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

The hospital ship USNS Mercy awaits port services in January after arriving in Singapore to take on supplies and personnel. The ship left Indonesia's Aceh province Wednesday, ending the U.S. military's tsunami relief in the area. The ship planned to stop in eastern Indonesia to treat patients there on its way home, the U.S. embassy said.

Alleged 9/11 flag back on auction

RICHMOND, Va. — An American flag reportedly flown at the Pentagon during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks is up for sale again after the high bidder withdrew his offer.

Todd Schimmel, 26, of Mound, Minn., took back his \$371,300 bid Tuesday after doubt was raised about whether the flag had really been flying during the attack.

David Nicholson, 44, of Orange, Va., auctioned the flag on eBay to raise money for his kidney cancer treatment.

The flag reportedly flew over a construction crane at the Pentagon. But during the original auction, Maryland-based Facchina Construction Co., which gave Nicholson the flag, said it did not have a crane at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

An update on the controversy is included in the description for the new, three-day auction, which was started on eBay on Tuesday evening.

From The Associated Press

Lawmaker. 'There's a charade going on here'

BY LEO SHANE III

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — House members angry over upcoming base closures lashed out at Air Force officials on Wednesday for the up-front costs expected and underwritten savings promised in the Base Realignment and Closure process.

The proposed 2006 defense budget includes \$2.5 billion in closure costs related to the BRAC decisions, even though no bases have yet been publicly identified as scheduled to be closed. Another \$5.7 billion in expenses is expected in 2007.

In addition, the 2006 budget includes about \$377 million in costs associated with the 1995 BRAC process, which incensed Rep. Neil Abernethy, D-Hawaii.

"This is 10 years later and the DOD is still asking for transition money to finance these savings," he said during a House Armed Services hearing.

"It's embarrassing when I go home to have to say there's not a single base secretaries can name that needs to be closed, but

Hearing on 2006 defense budget raises questions on BRAC costs

there's 24 percent base capacity that has to be gotten rid of. There's a charade going on here."

This year's process marks the fifth time since 1988 the Defense Department has looked to reduce its base holdings and costs, designed to make the military more efficient.

The list of bases affected is to be released May 16, though changes to that list could be made over the summer.

When pressed by committee members to name an Air Force base that could easily be eliminated, Air Force Secretary Peter Teets declined to pick a facility but defended the process.

"There is a straightforward, well-structured analysis going on," he said. "In any kind of restructuring activity... it requires upfront investment to achieve annual savings."

Teets said he has started to hear possible closure scenarios but "no decisions have been made."

Defense officials estimate the earlier BRAC rounds have saved about \$29 billion combined in reduced maintenance costs and profits from land sales.

Earlier in the week Phillip Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment, said the 24 percent excess capacity figure is only an estimate, and will not require that one in four bases be closed.

However, when pressed by House members, he also admitted the 24 percent figure is not a maximum either, and that the study could recommend closing a higher number of facilities as well.

Grone added that officials are taking into account the large number of servicemembers expected to return to U.S. bases from deployment abroad as military officials draw down troop totals in Europe and the Pacific arena.

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Budget crunch fuels concerns child care, services will suffer

BY LEO SHANE III

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress voiced concerns Tuesday that funding for child care centers, barracks maintenance

and other military base programs will be hurt by what they call inadequate money for construction and repair in the proposed 2006 defense budget.

During a House Armed Services subcommittee hearing, Rep. Joel Hefley, R-Colo., said he was "astounded" that Army officials haven't maintained "the level necessary to keep child care centers open, dining halls serving chow, lights turned on and base employees reporting to work."

Army operations funding will be underfunded by nearly \$1 billion in the proposed 2006 budget, and other military services will see a \$400 million drop in much-needed repair and construction funds, according to subcommittee members.

But defense officials said the funding levels are adequate, and the services are committed to maintaining current programs and providing quality housing to keep servicemembers' morale up.

"Soldiers and their families deserve the same quality of life as the society they are pledged to defend," said Geoffrey Prosch, deputy assistant secretary for Army installations and environment. "Our construction budget does have the resources for continued support of our mission."

For the Army, the proposed budget includes \$292 million for training-range repairs and upgrades, funding for construction of new barracks for about 5,200

The \$3.3 billion allotment for Army MILCON is only 70 percent of the anticipated need for operations support funding.

soldiers and new housing for about 5,800 families, and increased money for readiness and reserve centers.

But the \$3.3 billion allotment for Army MILCON (military construction) is only 70 percent of the anticipated need for operations support funding, well short of the Defense Department budgeting goal of 95 percent.

Joyce Raezer, director of government relations for the National Military Family Association, said her group has heard complaints from families about cutbacks in basic services, especially at Army posts.

"We're already seeing pink slips handed out to some base employees, hours cut back at dining halls," she said. "This is youth programs. This is fitness programs. We're very concerned about the quality of life at these facilities."

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Acting Air Force secretary to retire

BY LEO SHANE III
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Acting Air Force Secretary Peter Teets will retire by the end of this month after only two months on the job, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Jumper said Wednesday.

Jumper's comments came during testimony by both men before the House Armed Services Committee. Teets took over the post when former secretary James Roche retired Jan. 20, and has also been acting simultaneously as the service's chief acquisitions officer.



Teets

Sources within the Air Force said he will be retiring from both jobs on March 25, and that Michael L. Dominguez, currently assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs, will take over as secretary when Teets steps down.

Dominguez, an Army veteran, has served in his current post since August 2001. No announcement was made as to whether he will serve as an interim replacement or be appointed the permanent secretary.

Teets is the retired president of Lockheed Martin Corp. and has held jobs with several other prominent aerospace firms. He also serves as the Defense Department's executive agent for space, overseeing all major defense acquisition programs.

During Wednesday's hearing, Jumper praised Teets for his role in the service's space research and combat programs.

"He has made space relevant to the warfighter," Jumper said.

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Livorno construction under way

Field Support Brigade to get new workshops

BY SANDRA JONTZ
Stars and Stripes

The Army Materiel Command Field Support Brigade-Europe broke ground on a \$52 million project Tuesday to modernize its facilities at the Leghorn Army Depot in Livorno, Italy.

When complete, the upgrade will improve the delivery of combat-ready equipment and material to troops in the field, officials say.

"Our focus for the past few years has been on providing support directly to combatant forces, and not purely to pre-positioned stocks," brigade spokesman Charles Fick said. "The equipment we work on is coming from the fighting forces that have been in combat for the last year or more, and the renovations and repairs are extensive. It's not just a jiffy lube and tuneup."

The facilities at the depot date to the 1950s. When finished in 2007, there will be new workshops that can repair everything



from tracked or wheeled vehicles to generators, water purification units and bulldozers, Fick said, citing a few examples of the brigade's capabilities.

Field Support Brigade-Livorno also will have seven new humidity-controlled warehouses, 10 renovated warehouses, new administrative space and improved infrastructure such as roadways, Fick said.

"New facilities will enable us to accomplish our Army pre-positioned stocks and reset work more efficiently and safely," Norman Jasper, FSB-LI civilian executive assistant, said in a statement.

For example, Livorno's current facility has no overhead lift, "which makes removing engines more cumbersome and time-consuming," Fick said.

Officials gather for a ceremony Tuesday marking the start of a \$52 million construction project for Field Support Brigade-Livorno, Italy. The project will result in new workshops for tracked and wheeled vehicles, new warehouses and new office space.

C.W. Fick Jr.
Courtesy of the U.S. Army

The command's 1,600 civilian and military personnel are stationed in Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and are deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Navy engineers will oversee the project because the U.S. Navy holds oversight authority for military construction in Italy.

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Air Force's Essex selected as next AAFES commander

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force announced Monday that Maj. Gen. Paul W. "Bill" Essex will be the next commander of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

Essex is now director of Plans and Programs, Headquarters Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

In this capacity, he is responsible for force structure planning and programming, doctrine, requirements, manpower and analysis for the nation's air-lift and refueling force.

Prior to assuming his current position, General Essex was the Mission Area Director for Global Reach Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary

of the Air Force for Acquisition, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington.

AAFES' current commander Maj. Gen. Kathryn Frost will leave the post April 7 to retire, said AAFES spokesman Judy Anstey.

Until Essex's arrival in late June 2005, AAFES' Acting Commander will be Air Force Brig. Gen. L. Torrey Steele.

Frost is married to Martin Frost, a former U.S. Representative from Texas, who is to become a political commentator for the Fox News Channel.

Frost lost his seat in November after redistricting engineered by majority leader Tom DeLay forced him into a race against Republican Pete Sessions. He served 26 years in Congress.



Maj. Gen. Paul "Bill" Essex

D.C. anthrax scare was false alarm

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An apparent mix-up at a laboratory is being blamed for the anthrax scare that closed three mail facilities that handle Pentagon-bound mail, and prompted nearly 900 workers to receive antibiotics.

The two-day scare that recalled the fatal bioterrorist attacks of 2001 turned out to be a false alarm after definitive tests at two facilities came back negative Tuesday for the deadly spores.

Officials believe the confusion stemmed from a mistake at the laboratory that did the initial testing, and the mistaken conclusion was confirmed by a Defense Department laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md.

The working theory is that workers at the initial laboratory, Commonwealth Biotechnology Inc. in Richmond, Va., contaminated the sample taken from the Pentagon with actual anthrax that is kept on hand for comparison purposes, a Homeland Security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday. That would explain why the sample came back as positive for anthrax.

That initial sample, possibly already contaminated, was then delivered to Fort Detrick, which confirmed the presence of anthrax.

Later tests proved negative and officials realized the initial error, officials said.

In 2001 anthrax-by-mail attacks killed five people and panicked Americans still raw from the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Since then, scores of initial tests in government mailrooms have falsely reported anthrax. But this week's alarm was set off by two alert systems that independently suggested the presence of the bacteria — what officials now believe was a coincidence.

First, a filter on a device that screens mail for chemical and biological agents on the Pentagon grounds tested positive for anthrax. Separately, an alert was set off at a nearby satellite mail processing facility. Officials set out to retest the initial filter and gathered additional samples from the facilities for testing.

BRAC commission

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Tuesday nominated eight people with ties to defense to serve on the commission charged with closing U.S. military bases.

The president previously nominated former Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi to lead the nine-member independent commission.

Congress authorized the fifth round of closures last year.

If confirmed by the Senate, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will review a list of closures the Pentagon must propose by May.

The president's nominees include:

■ James H. Bilbray of Nevada

da, a former Army reservist and a former congressman who served on international relations, armed services and intelligence committees.

■ Philip Coyle of California, a senior adviser to the Center for Defense Information and a former assistant defense secretary.

■ Harold W. Gehman Jr. of Virginia, a retired Navy admiral and former NATO supreme allied commander.

■ James V. Hansen of Utah, a Navy veteran and former congressman who served on the armed services committee.

■ Sue Ellen Turner of Texas, a retired Air Force brigadier general who is a member of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

From The Associated Press

IN THE STATES

Bush taps Wolfowitz as World Bank head

BY JEANNINE AVERSA
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Wednesday tapped Defense Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who has been a lightning rod for criticism of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and other defense policies, to take over as head of the World Bank.

Bush told a news conference that Wolfowitz, now Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's top deputy, was "a compassionate, decent man who will do a fine job at the World Bank. That's why I put him up."

The administration began notifying other countries that Wolfowitz was the U.S. candidate to replace World Bank Presi-

dent James Wolfensohn, who is stepping down as head of the 184-nation development bank on June 1 at the end of his second five-year term.

The United States is the World Bank's largest shareholder. The bank traditionally has had an American president and its sister institution, the International Monetary Fund, traditionally has been headed by a European.

Bush noted that he had called Premier Silvio Berlusconi to talk about Iraq and other issues earlier in the day and said that he had discussed Wolfowitz, "my nominee," with the Italian leader.

Wolfowitz, 61, was among the most forceful of those in the Bush administration in

arguing that Iraq's Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, and he had predicted that Americans would be welcomed as liberators once they toppled Saddam's government.

A conservative scholar and veteran of six administrations, Wolfowitz earned a reputation for being a foreign policy hawk — representing the view that the United States should use its superpower status to push for reforms in



Wolfowitz

other nations.

He came under fire on Capitol Hill for underestimating the number of U.S. troops needed in Iraq and for understating the number of U.S. troops killed in Iraq during testimony to a House panel. He also was criticized for predicting before the invasion that Iraq oil would generate \$50 billion to \$100 billion over two to three years, limiting the war costs to U.S. taxpayers. Iraq generated just \$17 billion in oil revenues in the first 19 months after the invasion.

The World Bank's 24-member board will vote on Bush's selection of Wolfowitz to head the development bank. Approval is expected.

Judge affirms death penalty for Peterson

BY BRIAN SKOLOFF
The Associated Press

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. — A judge formally sentenced Scott Peterson to death Wednesday after calling the murder of his pregnant wife, Laci, "cruel, uncaring, heartless and callous."

Judge Alfred A. Delucchi then allowed family members to speak, prompting a shouting match that led to Peterson's father storming out of the courtroom.

Lee Peterson yelled from the audience as Laci's brother, Brent Rocha, spoke to the court, saying "Laci and Conner are the true victims here."

"What a liar!" Lee Peterson said before the judge admonished him and he left the courtroom. Jackie Peterson, Scott Peterson's mother, also interrupted Rocha but her voice was inaudible.

Scott Peterson, 32, was invited to make a statement. After several minutes of discussion with his

attorneys, he declined.

Delucchi denied a defense request for a new trial before saying he agreed with the jury that "death is warranted."

"The court is satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant, Scott Lee Peterson, is guilty of first-degree murder" and second degree, Delucchi said, adding that he found the killings "were cruel, uncaring, heartless and callous."

Peterson, shackled at the waist

and wearing a dark suit, was escorted into court under heavy security.

He will be sent to death row at San Quentin State Prison outside San Francisco, the infamous lock-up that overlooks the same bay where Laci Peterson's body was discarded.

He was convicted in November of first-degree murder in the killing of Laci and second-degree murder for the slaying of her fetus. A jury recommended the death penalty a month later.

Terror alert plan

WASHINGTON — The agency charged with protecting homeland security developed an elaborate, confidential report to alert states to a host of terror-strike scenarios, but the document was inadvertently posted on several states' public Web sites before being removed.

The department has been working for a year on a National Planning Scenarios plan that outlines a number of plausible attacks.

The report will be made public in upcoming months, Homeland Security spokesman Brian Rotherhass said Tuesday.

From The Associated Press



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Judge: Lack of court security breeds fear

BY DON THOMPSON

The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Noting recent violence against judges, the chief justice of California's Supreme Court urged lawmakers to boost security at courthouses, saying "the integrity and efficacy of the entire judicial process is in jeopardy."

Two-thirds of the state's 451 courthouses lack adequate security, Ronald M. George told state legislators Tuesday, only days after a Georgia judge, court reporter and sheriff's deputy were slain in a rampage.

Courthouses often have multiple entrance

es, inadequate screening, and no way to separate jurors, witnesses or suspects, he said. In some, jailed suspects must be moved through public hallways or through corridors past judges' chambers to get into the courtroom.

The Atlanta shootings, and the recent slayings in Chicago of a federal judge's husband and mother, are



George

shocking in part because "it highlights the physical vulnerability of our courts and shatters the public's expectation that black-robed judges occupying a high bench can dispense justice unthreatened by the dangers of everyday life," George suggested.

George recalled visiting a judge who had stacked law books in front of his bench as a barrier against flying bullets after his rural courthouse was the scene of an attempted hostage-taking.

"We need to make sure that courthouses are safe so that the law books can remain on the shelves where they belong — and not

substitute for a bulletproof shield," he said in his annual address to the Legislature.

Just on Monday, a reputed gang member in a San Fernando courtroom allegedly slashed his attorney with a concealed razor blade during his murder trial, George said.

"Courthouses must be a safe harbor to which members of the public come to resolve disputes that often are volatile." Courthouse security is not the only problem, he said. Some do not meet earthquake standards, are contaminated by toxic mold, or are housed in trailers. And three-quarters do not comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Michael Jackson case

SANTA MARIA, California — The lead investigator in the Michael Jackson child molestation case said he urged the accuser and his family to go forward with his claims against the singer by promising them, "We're going to try our best to make this case work."

Defense attorney Robert Sanger confronted Sgt. Steve Robel on Tuesday with those and other statements from recorded interviews, suggesting they indicated investigators were biased against Jackson from the beginning.

Robel's testimony came after the singer's accuser wrapped up his testimony by saying he told a school administrator that Jackson had not molested him because he wanted to avoid teasing from classmates.

Ebbers faces 85 years

NEW YORK — Some former employees and investors who lost jobs and billions of dollars in the collapse of WorldCom said the conviction of former CEO Bernard Ebbers was a fitting final act to the epic accounting scandal.

Ebbers was found guilty Tuesday of fraud, conspiracy and false regulatory filings after a six-week federal trial in Manhattan. He could spend the rest of his life in prison.

Judge Barbara Jones set sentencing for June 13.

The nine criminal counts against Ebbers, 63, carry up to 85 years in prison.

Beauty queen murder trial

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Jurors deliberated for a second day Wednesday in the murder trial of beauty queen Sharron Nicole Redmond, who shot her two-timing boyfriend outside the home of another woman he was dating.

Redmond, 23, faces an automatic life sentence if convicted of murdering Kevin Shorter on Dec. 16, 2003, four months after she was crowned Miss Savannah. Redmond says she shot him in self-defense.

The jury of nine women and three men deliberated nearly five hours Tuesday before breaking for the night without a verdict.

Redmond shot Shorter, 25, after a confrontation outside the home of his second girlfriend, Rachel Hall. He had dated both women for about three years.

From The Associated Press

THE FACE OF WAR HAS CHANGED.

Photo courtesy Soldier Magazine

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Daniel Pearl Award

LOS ANGELES — Jesus Blancornes, editor of Zeta, a leading Mexican investigative newspaper, will be the fourth recipient of the Daniel Pearl Award for Courage and Integrity in Journalism.

Blancornes, 69, co-founded the Tijuana-based weekly a quarter-century ago and has written investigative stories on drug trafficking, migrant smuggling and government corruption.

The Pearl Award will be presented to Blancornes by Judea and Ruth Pearl, parents of the late Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, who was killed after being abducted by Islamic militants in Pakistan.

Man admits sex crimes

LOS ANGELES — A 61-year-old man has pleaded guilty to having sex with underage girls in the pornography and producing child pornography and is expected to be sentenced to 17 years in prison, authorities said.

Edilberto Daton, a retired state real estate auditor from San Diego, acknowledged that he had sex with eight boys, ages 14 and 15, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said in a statement Tuesday.

Daton entered his plea March 1 in federal court to one count of engaging in illicit sexual conduct in foreign places and one count of producing child pornography outside the United States, U.S. attorney's office spokesman Thom Mrozek said.

Infant executed in Mo.

POTOSI, Mo. — A man convicted of kidnapping a woman and throwing her to her death off a bridge was executed early Wednesday.

Stanley Hall, 37, died by injection at 12:06 a.m. at the Potosi Correctional Center. He was convicted in the 1994 abduction and murder of Barbara Jo Wood of St. Louis County.

"I would like them [the Wood family] to know I am sorry, sincerely sorry," Hall said in a final written statement.

Video news releases

WASHINGTON — The White House on Monday defended the administration's use of video news releases that are sent to television stations across the country and frequently used without any acknowledgment of the government's role in their production.

In an opinion last week, the Justice Department concluded that the practice was appropriate as long as the videos presented factual information about government programs. The memo was sent to heads of federal departments and agencies.

From The Associated Press

Charities end tsunami collections

Some groups stop seeking donations to ensure money is used 'effectively'

BY DAVID PACE

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Despite reconstruction costs estimated at up to \$12 billion, several major charities and relief groups have stopped soliciting donations for survivors of December's Indian Ocean tsunami. At least one has begun returning money to donors.

Sensitized by recent charity scandals, agencies say they're being careful not to accept more money than they can legitimately spend to help tsunami victims.

The American Red Cross and British-based Oxfam stopped raising tsunami relief funds over a month ago, when pledges hit spending targets. Britain's Disasters Emergency Committee stopped last month, for the same reason.

Catholic Relief Services also has ceased active solicitation, with \$114 million in hand for

\$80 million in currently programmed tsunami relief work. Doctors Without Borders has returned more than \$500,000 in donations it couldn't use.

"We didn't want the restricted funds to outpace our capacity to use them effectively in the field," said Nicolas de Torrente, executive director of Doctors Without Borders. "We want to be responsible toward our donors and respect their wishes, that if they give for the tsunami, it will be used for that."

Since the Dec. 26 tsunami killed more than 170,000 people in 11 Asian countries, governments have pledged more than \$6 billion in relief and reconstruction funds. The United States initially pledged \$350 million, including \$226 million the U.S. military spent in emergency relief. President Bush has asked Congress to increase the overall U.S. aid package to \$950 million.

Americans have donated another \$1 billion to relief agencies, and British citizens have contributed \$575 million.

Jan Egeland, emergency relief coordinator for the United Nations, said most of the nearly \$1 billion the world body initially sought for emergency relief has been received and spent on food, shelter and medical help for tsunami survivors.

Governments and development groups now are focused on the estimated \$12 billion in reconstruction costs. Officials expect incidents of theft and fraud to increase as reconstruction gets under way.

"There is a limit to how much you can misuse a blanket, really, or how much you can misuse a bottle of purified water, or food ration," Egeland said. "It's more complicated if you are to rebuild highways, airports, schools and so on, and our development colleagues are acutely aware of that."

Miracle baby celebrates his first birthday

Boy was born while mom in coma

BY ERRIN HAINES

The Associated Press

DECATUR, Ga. — Emmanuel Hawkins celebrated a birthday Wednesday that he never supposed to live to see.

For 16 weeks after his mother lapsed into a coma brought on by an assault, Emmanuel continued to grow inside her womb. Doctors tried to persuade his grandmother, Nonnie Hawkins, to end the pregnancy. They warned her that even if Emmanuel was born, he could be severely deformed — or stillborn.

"I told them, 'I rebuke you. I have the final say,'" Hawkins said. "I'm believing my child is going to wake up and have this baby."

But after 114 days, Tara Hawkins-Bottoms never woke up. The 18-year-old did, however, stay alive long enough to give birth on March 16, 2004, to a 2-pound, 10-ounce boy.

"God delivered him," Hawkins said.

Her daughter was taken off life support two days later.

Born three months premature — very weak and barely breathing — Emmanuel was not expected to survive 24 hours. He was hospitalized for 10 weeks with medical problems that included a bacterial infection and low blood pressure, and had to have heart and eye surgery.

"He was as close to death's door as you can get without entering," said his doctor, neo-natologist Bridget Cobb.

"To come from those circumstances is just miraculous to me. It was a reminder to me that I am not in charge."



Nonnie Hawkins holds her grandson, Emmanuel Hawkins, at their home in Atlanta on Monday. Emmanuel, who turned 1 on Wednesday, was given little chance to live while in the womb of his mother, Tara, who delivered him while in a coma.

Emmanuel's struggles from his first months of life are fading into a memory as he slips into the routine of a normal toddler.

He is trying to take his first steps. He likes peek-a-bow, apple juice and classical music. Hawkins says he is now "completely healthy."

She says the boy is her saving grace after the death of her daughter, who was attacked in November 2003 by a neighborhood acquaintance.

"This whole thing has been a nightmare," she said. "I would lose my mind if I didn't have Emmanuel."

Faculty calls for Harvard president's resignation

The Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Harvard President Lawrence Summers was hoping for a sign that the worst was behind him, that critics were prepared to accept his apologies and move on.

Instead, Summers got a reminder Tuesday of just how angry some Harvard faculty members are over his management style and recent controversial comments about women in science.

In a surprising — if only symbolic — 218-185 vote, Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences approved a motion expressing a "lack of confidence" in Summers' leadership.

In Harvard's nearly 400-year history, which includes bitter disputes between presidents and faculty over everything from religion to investment in apartheid-era South Africa, such a vote was unprecedented.

"This was a resounding statement the faculty lacks confidence in President Lawrence Summers and he should resign," said J. Lorand Matory, a professor of anthropology and African and African-American Studies who submitted the motion. "There is no noble alternative to resignation."

Summers had given no indication he would consider stepping down. He officially answers only to the Harvard Corporation, which has expressed support for him.



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OPINION

Jackson's approach to trial is out of this world

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

The Miami Herald

I was in Michael Jackson's bedroom once.

This was long enough ago that he still had brown skin and God's intended nose. Contrary to the allegations that have surfaced in his child molestation trial, Jackson offered me neither "Jesus Juice" nor pornography. I remember only a rattan chair and shelves of movie memorabilia, including Disney, the Three Stooges and a likeness of Jackson himself as the scarecrow from "The Wiz." His room was the last stop on a tour of the family home in the L.A. suburb of Encino following an interview.

To get inside the Jackson compound, you spoke your name into an electronic box and a heavy black door swung ponderously open. You drove down a long driveway past a pen where fearsome guard dogs were caged. "Act like you're going to attack me," Jackson said as he pointed them out to me. I obediently lifted a fist and took a step in his direction only to become a mannequin as the dogs hurred themselves against the fence, barking and slavering. As I was concentrating on bladder control, Jackson doubled over, laughing.

He was a free creature, insubstantial as smoke, who slouched about the house as if bored of existence itself. The life he described in that whisper-soft voice of his was lonely, isolated and sad. He complained of being unable to go beyond the gates for fear of being mobbed. Still, he confided, he

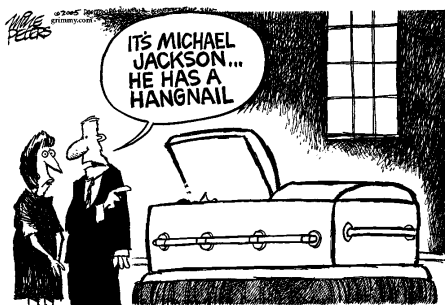
slipped out sometimes late at night and walked the streets, looking for someone to talk to. I was never sure about that story until years later when a man I knew told me how he'd been driving near the Jackson home one night when who should he see but Michael, walking alone.

I left the Jackson home feeling vaguely sorry for the family's most famous son, feeling that here was a guy who was not of us, a pitiful man who desperately needed a guide to instruct him in how things are done here on planet Earth.

It's a feeling that returned in force last Thursday when I saw him arrive at court for his trial wearing pajama bottoms.

Jackson, for the three of you who missed it, turned up AWOL when testimony was set to resume. The singer's attorneys explained that Jackson, suffering severe back pain, had been taken to the hospital earlier that morning. An infuriated Judge Rodney Melville threatened to revoke the singer's \$3 million bail and slap him in jail. He gave Jackson an hour to get his courtroom to court. The singer, disheveled, hobbling in apparent pain and with his jammed, showed up an hour and three minutes later.

Now work with me here. You're Michael Jackson. You're on trial on charges that could send you away for 20 years. You have already backed off the judge by showing up late for an earlier court appearance, dancing on top of an SUV, and forcing jury selection to be held up for a week while you are hospitalized with the flu. From here on out, aren't you going to make every effort not to tee the



man off any more? Yes, you would. Me too. I don't care if my back aches, if I have to lean on a cane, if I have to be rolled in a chair, if I have to be carried by my bodyguard, if I have to be wheeled into court on a gurney, popping painkillers like M&Ms, my body would be present and accounted for when the session was gavelled to order.

That's how every ordinary human does things on Planet Earth. But that's a place Jackson has not lived for a very long time. He has been working since he was 5, famous since

he was 11, sequestered behind gates since shortly thereafter.

Moreover, he has spent his life surrounded by flunkies who follow his orders, shape his environment to his tastes and say yes a lot. I doubt he can even remember the last time someone could tell him what to do. So what does he know about having to be governed by someone else's orders? What does he know about Earth? Nothing, that's what.

But if he's not very careful, Jackson will soon have 20 years to learn.

When the going gets tough, make room for Daddy

BY ALFRED LUBRANO

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Oh, it's tender, really. Government big shots suddenly decide to ditch fabulous careers because, darn it all, they've missed too many of little Billy's school plays.

They claim to anyone who'll listen: "I'm leaving to spend more time with my family."

It's the beautiful American lie, perfect for its homely sentiment and apparent courage.

Embattled Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael Powell needs to see more of his family, and will begin hanging with them this week.

There are others: former embattled CIA Director George Tenet, former embattled Environmental Protection Agency head Christie Whitman, former embattled FBI Director Louis Freeh, and many, many more.

When the going gets tough, the tough go home.

You would think that the American family would be in better shape than it is, given all the people who drop out of jobs that feature limos and White House access just to play Boggle on a Wednesday night with Junior. Never mind that in many cases Junior is now 45.

No one just comes out and says, "I've been a cold-war-shielded and marginized colleague with me dead, and the president is setting my desk on fire."

Now, "quitting for the family" can be enshrined among other classic mendacities of

our culture, like "No, that doesn't make you look fat" and "It's not you, it's me."

Truth is, Powell is pilloried by both the left and the right, and leaving seems smart. Whitman was being assailed by the Bush administration for, it appears, not dismantling the environment fast enough, and Freeh was taking hits for FBI missteps.

And by coyly declaring that he would step down from running the largest spy network in Earth history to "learn how to do instant-message" his son's friends, Tenet avoided revisiting his "slam-dunk" guarantee that Iraq was lousy with humanitarian-cancelling bombs.

Some of the oddest people play the family card, such as Bernard Kerik, the former New York City po-

lice commissioner who'd been nominated for secretary of homeland security. He withdrew from consideration for the post, then quickly departed the Rudy Giuliani-run consulting firm at which he spent, to — here comes a surprise — spend more time with his peeps.

Funny, he didn't mention the media's hounding him about his alleged connections to mobbed-up people and about the extramarital affairs he was reportedly conducting with two women.

Which family, by the way, was he going to be spending more time with?

To complete the hypocrisy, some of these family-missing folks get home, invest a few nights reuniting with the cat, then speed out of the house faster than you can say, "Wasn't it your turn to take the kids to soccer practice, Mr. Secretary?"

After leaving the FBI, Freeh signed on as a senior executive at MBNA Corp., the giant Wilmington, Del.-based credit-card

issuer. Freeh is responsible for 26,000 people in four countries, a burden that might cut into one or two pizza nights with his six sons.

John Danforth quit as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations to spend more days with his wife, then immediately rejoined his old law firm, announcing that he wouldn't rule out public service.

People should come up with more honest — or at least original — things to say about quitting.

I'm leaving my job to:

■ order hookers and room service for seven weeks until the pain this job inflicted ebbs;

■ join the Carmelite nuns (I hear they're nice);

■ learn how to properly start a fire the Boy Scout way; and

■ cash in on my public service by pulling down more money than God and Oprah.

BY BRUCE TINSLEY

Mallard Fillmore



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IN THE WORLD

Russian plane crash kills at least 29

BY VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — A 1970s-era Russian turbo-prop airliner carrying 53 people crashed and caught fire Wednesday while trying to land near an oil port along the Arctic coast, and at least 29 people were killed, officials said. Some survivors used a satellite phone to call authorities from the wreckage.

A Russian emergency official said on condition of anonymity that the plane's tail was falling apart before the crash. An investigation into the crash is under way.

There were 46 passengers and seven

crew members aboard the Regional Airlines An-24 plane that crashed near Varandei in the Nenets autonomous region along Russia's Arctic coast. Regional is a small, private carrier.

Twenty-nine people were killed, said Sergei Vlasov, spokesman for the Emergency Situations Ministry. Of the 24 survivors, 10 were in grave condition, Vlasov said.

Most of the passengers worked for the Lukoil oil company.

Yuri Kovalyov, spokesman for the local branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry, said survivors contacted authorities on a satellite phone and rescuers quickly

reached the site.

The plane was approaching the airport when it suddenly banked and slammed into the ground near Varandei, about 1,110 miles northeast of Moscow.

The plane departed from the city of Ufa in the southern Ural Mountains region and made stopovers in the cities of Perm and Ussinsk before continuing on to Varandei.

The An-24 is a Soviet-designed turbo-prop airliner built in the 1960s for short and medium-length trips. Hundreds are still in service with airlines in Russia and other former Soviet republics, and analysts have warned that small airlines have

had trouble properly maintaining the aging aircraft.

The Transport Ministry said in a statement that the plane that crashed was built in 1972 and had been repaired 10 times, the latest in 2002. The plane's chief pilot, Viktor Popov, who reportedly died in the crash, had logged up 14,000 flight hours, it said.

"It was a very experienced crew," the chief of the Transport Ministry's aviation department, Alexander Neradko, said in televised comments.

Most of the passengers worked for Russia's Lukoil, company spokesman Mikhail Mikhailov said.

ElBaradei: Terrorists must not get nukes

The Associated Press

LONDON — World leaders must do more to stop terrorists from obtaining nuclear or radioactive material they could use in a devastating attack, the head of the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog warned Wednesday.

There is a small chance that international terrorists could steal and launch a nuclear weapon, causing horrific casualties, said Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, opening a three-day conference on nuclear security.

Less devastating but more likely, terrorists could obtain radioactive material and pack it into a "dirty bomb" with conventional explosives, ElBaradei said. Terrorists instead on causing panic and mass casualties could also sabotage a nuclear plant or transport, he said.

ElBaradei said there had been more than 650 confirmed incidents of trafficking of nuclear or other radioactive material in recent years, demonstrating that security of such materials must be improved.

Nations also must work harder to track radioactive material and fund international efforts to boost security at nuclear facilities and of systems for detecting nuclear materials that are being transported.

Former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, now co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative group, said the world was not doing enough to prevent a catastrophic nuclear or radioactive attack.

"The threats are outrunning our response," he said. Nunn said the greatest dangers were that terrorists could steal highly enriched uranium and build a nuclear bomb, or take radioactive material to build a "dirty bomb."

He also said there was a danger of many new nations obtaining nuclear weapons, heightening tensions and increasing the risk of a nuclear accident or theft by terrorists.



U.S. EMBASSY/AP

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice receives flowers from Pakistani children upon her arrival Wednesday in Islamabad, Pakistan. Rice, who is touring Asia, was to meet Pakistani leadership to discuss issues of mutual interests for the U.S. war on terror.

Rice visits India, Pakistan on tour

BY ANNE GEARAN

The Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — The United States and India papered over differences on U.S. arms sales to Pakistan and an Indian natural gas pipeline deal with Iran on Wednesday, ahead of a possible visit to India by President Bush later this year.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice discussed future sales of sophisticated F-16 fighter planes to both India and rival Pakistan with her Indian counterpart before flying to Pakistan, but said no announcement is imminent.

India wants to buy the U.S. weaponry while denying it to Pakistan. The neighboring rivals have fought three wars since their 1947 independence from Britain.

Meanwhile, the United States wants India to scotch a potential deal to build an oil pipeline from Iran to serve the expanding economy in India, the world's largest democracy.

"We did express ... concerns about several matters on the defense issue," Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh said at a joint press conference with Rice.

"There are one or two items on which we don't agree, but our relations have now reached a maturity where we can discuss these things freely and frankly."

Rice said U.S. objections to the proposed \$4 billion pipeline are well-known. The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iran and wants to keep international pressure on the Tehran regime to give up nuclear ambitions and institute democratic reforms.

Singh, however, indicated little willingness to back off pipeline discussions.

"We have no problems of any kind with Iran," Singh said. India has had disagreements with Iran over the price of fuel the line would carry.

The pipeline would travel through Pakistan. It was proposed nearly a decade ago but plans sat idle because of high tension between India and Pakistan. Although still suspicious of one another, India and Pakistan are taking several tentative steps toward better relations and both nations see the pipeline as an important cooperation.

Rice said F-16 sales would be a topic during talks in Pakistan, the next stop on her one-week whistle-stop tour of South Asia and Asia.

Jericho handed over

JERICHO, West Bank — Israeli troops handed this West Bank town to Palestinian security control on Wednesday, dismantling a checkpoint and easing travel restrictions in what was seen as a message to ordinary Palestinians that an informal truce is starting to pay off.

Jericho was the first of five West Bank towns to be handed over.

Israel's redeployment Wednesday gave a boost to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas as he tried to formalize a cease-fire deal with Palestinian militant groups.

EU talks with Croatia

BRUSSELS, Belgium — European Union foreign ministers on Wednesday delayed membership talks with Croatia because the Zagreb government has not sent a fugitive former general to the U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

"The opening of accession negotiations is postponed until Croatia is 'cooperating fully' with the tribunal where Gen. Ante Gotovina faces a war crimes trial, said Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, who chaired the EU meeting.

The membership talks were to have opened Thursday. The foreign ministers set no new date. Asselborn stressed "the EU's door is open for Croatia" and said entry talks can open on short notice if Croatia works "harder than has been the case so far" to cooperate with the war crimes tribunal to bring Gotovina to justice.

Syrian agents withdraw

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Syrian military intelligence agents abandoned their Beirut office Wednesday, ending their 18-year presence in the Lebanese capital by driving away in buses and cars.

The withdrawal was in line with international demands — including the United States and the United Nations — and the Lebanese opposition.

Intelligence agents and officers left in two buses and several sedans shortly before noon. A checkpoint outside the head office was removed and the sentry post at the entrance of the compound, which housed offices and a dormitory for Syrian officers, was demolished shortly before they left.

From The Associated Press

N. Korea won't deal with Rice

The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea bitterly refused Wednesday any dealings with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as the top U.S. diplomat began a six-day visit to Asia seeking a breakthrough in the two-year standoff over the North's nuclear weapons program.

North Korea was angered in January when Rice labeled it one of the world's "outposts of tyranny." She has refused to withdraw the remark, and said it reflects the truth about the communist country. "It is quite illogical for the U.S. to intend to negotiate with [North Korea] without retracting its remarks listing its dialogue partner as 'an outpost of tyranny,'" an unidentified North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said Wednesday.

Rice "can make nothing but such outcries as she is no more than an official of the most tyrannical dictatorial state in the world," the North's official Korean Central News Agency quoted the spokesman as saying.



AP photos

World leaders, including German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, second left, gather under the conical-shaped roof in the Hall of Names on Wednesday during inauguration ceremonies at the new Holocaust museum in Jerusalem.

The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said Wednesday that Jerusalem's new Holocaust memorial is a place of deep shame for all Germans, because his country will remain forever linked to the Nazi genocide of six million Jews.

Fischer and some 40 other world leaders attended a second day of ceremonies and educational conferences to mark the opening of the \$56 million museum, which tells the story of the Holocaust from the victims' viewpoint through personal testimonies and artifacts.

Speakers, including those from Israel, said there was a rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, and promised to battle racism.

Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said he would try to preserve the memory of the Pol-



A visitor stands in front of a picture of death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.

ish Jewish community that was nearly obliterated by the Nazis, and French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin said his government would stand strong against anti-Semitism.

New York Mayor Michael

Bloomberg urged all "as citizens of the world, to never forget."

Fischer, a frequent visitor to Israel, said that the Holocaust museum "is a place of deep shame for any German because the name of my country, Germany, is and will

forever be inseparably linked to the Shoah, the ultimate crime against humanity."

"The Shoah ... will forever remain an indelible part of German history," he said, using the Hebrew name for the Holocaust.

To give a human dimension to Holocaust statistics, some 90 personal stories are woven into the museum's display, which also features some 280 works of art.

Underground galleries on either side of a 600-foot central walkway guide visitors through the history of Adolf Hitler's Final Solution: prewar life, anti-Semitic laws, roundups, deportations, mass executions, death camps.

"For the benefit of the past, but also for a future that has to be free of xenophobia [and] racism, we, the Polish people, believe it's very important not to lose the memory of our Jewish brothers and sisters," Kwasniewski said.

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Billionaire's vacation

GRENOBLE, France — The billionaire boss of the Samsung conglomerate, Lee Kun-hee, is treating himself to the dream ski vacation, renting three runs all to himself at the French Alpine resort of Courchevel, resort management said Wednesday.

Lee has rented the runs for three weeks, starting Thursday, said Claude Faure, director of the Three Valleys firm that manages the ski area. Netting will separate Lee's area from other parts of the resort.

EU divorce rules

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The European Commission said Monday it plans to draw up new laws clarifying divorce rules for mixed-nationality couples within the 25-nation bloc.

The commission did not provide figures on the scale of the problem, but said that in Germany alone about 30,000 couples with partners of differing nationality divorce every year.

Book called prejudicial

VATICAN CITY — If you're not among the millions who have already read "The Da Vinci Code," an Italian cardinal has a plea for you: Don't read it and don't buy it.

Genoa Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone told Vatican Radio on Tuesday the runaway success of author Dan Brown's novel is proof of "anti-Catholic" prejudice.

Bertone has been mentioned as a possible successor to Pope John Paul II.

Public hanging in Iran

PAKDASHI, Iran — A young man convicted of raping and murdering 16 boys was lashed 100 times, and then hanged Wednesday in front of a large, angry crowd who pelted him with stones and scuffled with police.

Mohammed Bijan, 23, confessed in court to raping and murdering 5,000 spectators — including women and children — gathered to watch the flogging and hanging.

From The Associated Press

Hospitals fight order

IL CHICAGO — Four hospitals are resisting demands by Gov. Rod Blagojevich to shut down their medical waste incinerators. The hospitals are indicating they should be paid to recoup the cost of complying with air pollution laws. Last fall, Blagojevich backed community activists urging that the trash burners be shut down.

Split on slots

FL MIAMI — New Las Vegas-style slot machines were given the thumbs-up for four betting sites in Broward County, but neighboring Miami-Dade County narrowly rejected a similar proposal.

The decision in Broward County clears the way for slot machines at two horse-racing tracks, one greyhound track and one jai alai site. The Miami-Dade plan would have allowed slots at three locations in the county.

The Broward proposal passed 57 percent to 43 percent, while the Miami-Dade plan received 47 percent of the vote.

Hit-and-run kills widow

NY ROME — An 84-year-old widow was killed by a hit-and-run driver in central New York as she walked from a hospital to her parked car, according to police.

Mary LuRusso had been visiting a cousin who was a patient. She was struck before 7 p.m. in the drive-through area near Rome Memorial Hospital's emergency room exit, police said. Someone found her and called hospital personnel, who brought her inside and attempted to save her, Detective Commander Edward Stevens said.

Own gun shoots boy, 7

OH COLUMBUS — A gun in a bookbag discharged in an elementary school classroom and the primary school student who brought it was shot in the hand, police said.

The injury to the 7-year-old was not believed to be life-threatening. Police were uncertain why the gun went off.

Columbus schools did not cancel classes, but some parents took their children from Leawood Elementary School. There were 15 children in class when the 45-caliber pistol gun went off, police Sgt. David Sicilian said.

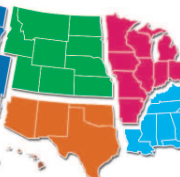
The boy's mother "indicated she had no idea where the weapon came from," Sicilian said.

State's drinking problem

ND MANDAN — A recent study from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health found more than 31 percent of North Dakotans age 12 and older said they had five or more drinks in one sitting during the month before the survey done in 2002 and 2003. The national average for binge drinking was 23 percent.

Binge use is defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the last 30 days.

Bartender Laura Thompson, who owns the Old Town Tavern in Mandan with her husband, Roger, chuckled at that definition. She said nearly everyone in the bar's



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

weekly dart league would easily meet the criteria.

Nearly 55 percent of North Dakotans between the ages of 18 and 25 reported binge drinking. About 17 percent who were ages 12 to 17 and about 28 percent in the 26- and older category said they had five or more drinks in one sitting.

North Dakota's 11 percent rate of alcohol dependence and abuse also led the nation in the study.

Drug side effects tallied

DC WASHINGTON — The Food and Drug Administration received more than 422,500 reports of drug side effects last year, a record, the agency said.

Final figures will be available until spring but the preliminary estimate was confirmed by spokeswoman Laura Alvey.

That tops the 370,887 reports of what the agency calls "adverse events" in 2003.

Agency officials attribute the rise to increased use of prescription drugs rather than an increase in risk from the drugs.

Drug makers are required to tell the agency any instances of side effects reported to them and FDA also hears directly from patients and physicians.

Nurse admits to theft

PA CARLISLE — A nurse pleaded guilty to stealing more than \$25,000 from residents of the Lower Allen Township retirement community where she worked.

Mary Louise Ross, 47, pleaded



Wearing of the grin

Mark Floyd, 6, of Baltimore sports a toothless grin and his Irish green as he marches with his grandmother in Baltimore's St. Patrick's Day parade.

guilty to one count of theft by deception before Cumberland County Judge Kevin A. Hess. She remained in Dauphin County Prison on a parole violation for a 1992 crime.

Ross stole credit card information and checks from two residents of the Bethany Village retirement community from August to November 2001 and forged checks that she made payable to herself and businesses in her name, Senior Assistant District Attorney Michelle Sibert said.

Sprucing up fake lagoon

HI HONOLULU — Work could begin soon on a \$5 million project to restore the neglected saltwater lagoon at the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Waikiki. Hotel officials say they plan to make the 50-year-old man-made lagoon shallower, smaller and cleaner.

They also plan to install a public boardwalk around it.

These patients don't cry

ID POCATELLO — Doctors at Portneuf Medical Center recently found themselves treating an additional 770 patients — all dolls and stuffed animals.

The annual Teddy Bear Clinic drew a record turnout of children, who brought their dolls, teddy bears and other stuffed animals in need of medical attention.

The event was aimed at making a visit to the hospital less frightening for children.

"It's like they are the parent. They get to experience it from the other side," hospital spokeswoman Crista Madison Smith said.

Children expressed their animal's problems to a receptionist while checking the toy into the hospital. Officials reported stories like "My bear broke his leg by jumping on the bed" or "My sister bit him."

The children also helped doctors decide how to treat the toys.

"X-ray is popular," Smith said. "Casting was probably the most popular this year, but surgery is always fascinating to kids."

Heli-mushing is out

AK ANCHORAGE — The Bureau of Land Management ended plans for a heli-mushing camp on the Nenana Glacier near Denali National Park and Preserve this summer. Era Aviation anticipated shuttling as many as 3,000 tourists to and from the glacier for sled dog races. However, strong opposition arose from residents concerned about increased helicopter traffic and noise.

Bringing history alive

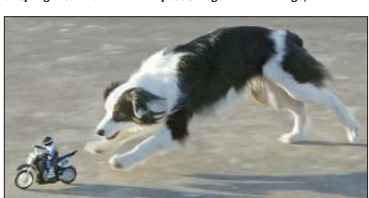
NV SPARKS — A gala marking Sparks' 100 years as a city will be held at the Sparks Heritage Museum. Plans called for a Pony Express rider to arrive at the museum with a proclamation from Gov. Kenny Guinn. Dr. Michael Fisher was to portray Gov. John Sparks, the city's namesake.

Watching the streets

TN NASHVILLE — The Nashville Police Department is going to use a network of surveillance cameras to monitor activities in areas with high crime rates, including the downtown nightspot section. Memphis installed a dozen cameras in the mid-1990s, but canceled the program because of technical problems.



When seagulls attack From left, Heather Burnside, 18; Nikki Strickland, 19; and Julie Bishop, 18, all of Jonesboro, Ark., are mobbed by seagulls as they feed them at Gulf State Park public beach in Gulf Shores, Ala. The three are on spring break from William Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, Ark.



What dogs dream about Katy, a border collie-Australian shepherd mix, chases a radio-control motorcycle driven by owner Kevin Puntigam of Roseburg, Ore., at Stewart Park in Roseburg.



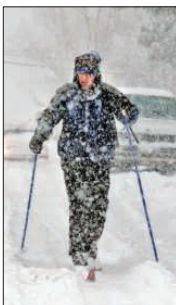
Skater boy Christopher Sabo, 3, wears his skates on his hands after warmer temperatures made the ice too slushy for skating at the Oxford Youth Association rink in Oxford, N.J.



Containing a garage fire A firefighter prepares to fight a fire consuming an attached garage of a house in Worcester, Vt. Firefighters from five departments battled the blaze, saving the house from major damage and rescuing a family cat. No one was injured in the fire.



Shake your tailfeathers An Eastern wild turkey tom fans his tailfeathers as he and his two hens cross a rural road near Newburg, Wis.



Slow commute

Curt Craig, an eighth-grade teacher at Flagstaff Middle School, skis home on an unexpected day off. The Flagstaff, Ariz., school district closed area schools when 6 inches of snow fell on the city.



Birthday battle Civil War re-enactors with the 2nd U.S. Infantry, Company C, foreground, fire on Confederate re-enactors of the 30th North Carolina, Infantry Company K, during Living History Day at The Museum of the Waxhaws in Waxhaw, N.C. Living History Day celebrates President Andrew Jackson's birth on March 15, 1767, in the area.

Justice delayed 30 years

PA HARRISBURG — A man who killed his wife in 1969 pleaded guilty to walking away from prison while on furlough 30 years ago.

Allen D. Marshall, 63, was captured in Houston a year ago and brought back to Pennsylvania to finish serving his five- to 10-year sentence for voluntary manslaughter.

Marshall entered his plea under a 1973 prison breach charge, which carries a stiffer punishment than a prison-escape charge would today, said Cumberland County First Assistant District Attorney David Freed. He could face up to 10 more years for walking away from the prison when he is sentenced in May.

Alleged porn ring busted

TX DALLAS — A Colorado adult entertainment business owner and two Arlington residents face federal charges accusing them of participating in a multi-million dollar operation that illegally distributed pornography and underreported profits to avoid paying taxes.

Edward Wedelstedt, 62, of the Denver area, was accused of running a criminal enterprise in 18 states through his company, Goalie Entertainment Holdings Inc., and conspiring to defraud the government by not reporting large sums of cash income.

Two Arlington residents, Leroy Moore Sr., 64, and Beverly Kay Van Dusen, 46, were accused of conspiring to sell porn at Dallas-area stores and paying a percentage of revenues back to Wedelstedt's company.

A 23-count indictment alleged Goalie Entertainment managed bookstores that sold pornographic magazines, videos and products in the front and showed sexually explicit movies in back rooms to customers who purchased tokens.

Using their resources

HI HONOLULU — Lawmakers on Monday advanced a measure that would ease the way for a technology that uses cold water piped from the depths of the Pacific Ocean to cool Hawaii's tropical heat.

Known as seawater air conditioning, the method of cooling could reduce the state's dependency on fossil fuels by bringing down electricity needs, according to the state Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, which supports the bill.

Members of the House Committee on Economic Development and Business Concerns voted to pass the measure, which would exempt seawater air conditioning projects from public utility regulation.

Because the companies would not be the only providers of a service essential to public health and welfare, they do not need oversight from the public utilities commission, John Cole, executive director of the Division of Consumer Advocacy, said in written testimony to the committee.

Singing a proud tune

MO KANSAS CITY — Mike Hendricks is hoping he can make his hometown sing a different tune.

Hendricks was baffled to learn "Kansas City," the 1950s ditty that goes, "I'm goin' to Kansas City — Kansas City here I come," was not

his city's official song.

So the Kansas City Star writer did what any communist would do to stir up change — he started singing ink.

In recent months, his columns on correcting the oversight have caught the city's attention. The effort has even received the blessing of Mike Stoller and Jerry Leiber, the songwriters who penned the song in 1951.

This month, the newspaper and city planners will start a campaign to make the song the town's definitive golden oldie.

A bright future in steel

MS COLUMBUS — Gov. Haley Barbour signed a bill containing financial incentives to lure a steel mill to the state.

A company called SteelCorr wants to break ground this month on a minimill to manufacture automotive-grade steel. The plant is supposed to create 450 jobs paying an average of \$70,000 a year.

Navajo gambling

AZ WINDOW ROCK — Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. cleared the way for gambling at five tribal chapters by taking no action on legislation passed by the tribal council. The council voted 59-14 last month for a proposal to legalize gambling in the Shiprock, Hogback and Manuelito chapters in New Mexico and the Nahata Dził and Leupp chapters in Arizona.

Voting problems alleged

MD ROCKVILLE — A review of voting machines used in Maryland's most populous county for the November elections found that 7 percent of the machines had problems such as frozen screens or failed to boot up.

An additional 5 percent in Montgomery County had vote tallies that were considerably lower than other machines used in the same precincts, causing election officials to deem them "suspect," according to the report. It was drafted by the county in December for the local election board.

But state officials disputed those figures, saying a review of the county's machines conducted by the state and the equipment's manufacturer showed that only 0.4 percent had significant problems in the Nov. 3 election.

4 killed at bus stop

NV LAS VEGAS — An SUV jumped the curb and plowed into a bench at a municipal bus stop, killing four people and scattering bodies, broken glass and schoolbooks.

The driver was jailed on suspicion of driving under the influence, police said.

The Ford Explorer skidded along a concrete wall about 10 miles from the Las Vegas Strip and demolished the bench on which the victims were sitting, police said.

"Basically the bench is attached to the cement wall," Sgt. Chris Jones said. "There was no place for them to go."

The victims were not immediately identified but appeared to be in their middle and late teens, Jones said.

The 34-year-old driver was not seriously hurt.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Commonwealth Games baton begins trek

Elle Macpherson set the 2006 Commonwealth Games baton off on its yearlong journey to the Australian host city of Melbourne.

The Australian model carried the Queen's baton through the gates of Buckingham Palace on Monday before handing it to 2000 Olympic 400-meter champion Cathy Freeman.

Queen Elizabeth II put a microphone containing her message to athletes competing at the games from March 15-26, 2006, into the high-tech baton, which also contains two miniature TV cameras and a GPS tracking device.

The technology will allow the baton's progress to be followed on the Internet as it is carried by thousands of runners on its 110,000-mile relay through all 71 Commonwealth nations.

Macpherson

Essence Music Festival prepares lineup

Frankie Beverly and Maze will close out the 11th annual Essence Music Festival July 1-3, as they have every year since the festival began.

The 2005 festival will kick off a yearlong celebration of the 35th anniversary of Essence magazine, a lifestyle publication aimed at black women.

Along with familiar acts, festival organizers also have booked some of urban music's brightest new stars for the "party with a purpose," in the Louisiana Superdome.

Joining Aretha Franklin on the stage will be Alicia Keys, John Legend, Ruben Studdard, Destiny's Child, Kanye West, Teena Marie, Fantasia, Lionel Richie, Mo'Nique and Kem.

Beckham preparing for life after soccer

English soccer star David Beckham unveiled plans Monday for The David Beckham Academy, which opens this summer next to the Millennium Dome in East London, where he grew up.

"There is that certain kind of buzz when you step on a football pitch," Beckham said. "I want to be able to get that same kind of buzz with the soccer school."

"I'll play up to the point where I feel my legs are getting too old and I can't do it anymore at the top level," he added. "When that time comes, that when I'll go into the soccer school."

After this season, Beckham has two years remaining on his contract with Real Madrid. He arrived at the club 20 months ago, and it's been nothing. He'll turn 30 in May, and he knows Madrid fans are demanding and impatient.

"I'm happy at Real Madrid and want to stay at Real Madrid as long as I can," he said. "But in football and life, you never know what is going to happen."



England and Real Madrid soccer player David Beckham plays with a soccer ball as he launches the David Beckham Academy in London.

Concert to be held for tsunami victims

Andrea Bocelli and other top Italian musicians will perform in a concert next week to raise funds to help victims of the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

The March 21 concert will be held at the Forum di Assago in Milan.

The agency said on its Web site that it would distribute funds raised in the concert to help tens of thousands of people who have been displaced in Sri Lanka following the Dec. 26 tsunami.

"We welcome this event ... to assist the internally displaced people in Sri Lanka who have experienced not only the effects of a protracted civil conflict, but now a natural disaster as well," said James Lynch, head Commissioner for Refugees in Sri Lanka.

of the U.N. High
Lanka.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

Judas Priest's Rob Halford takes the stage and is greeted by a thunderous ovation at the Stadthalle in Offenbach, Germany, on Friday.

RAYMOND T. CONWAY
Stars and Stripes



Message from The Metal God

Judas Priest singer Rob Halford praises U.S. troops across the world as the band kicks off a new tour

BY RAYMOND T. CONWAY
Stars and Stripes

Legendary metal singer Rob Halford is back with a vengeance, once again commanding center stage with the reunited British heavy metal pioneers Judas Priest.

More than 4,000 leather- and denim-clad heavy metal maniacs packed the Stadthalle in Offenbach, Germany, as Halford and band mates Glenn Tipton, K.K. Downing, Ian Hill and Scott Travis ripped through an explosive two-hour, 22-song set.

The intensity of the band and crowd was electrifying, as fans ranging in age from 16 to 60 were treated to several classics such as "Breaking the Law," and "Living After Midnight" — along with four killer cuts from the band's new album, "Angel of Retribution," which was released March 1.

Backstage following the Offenbach performance, Halford spoke with Stars and Stripes and offered words of encouragement for U.S. troops fighting the war on terrorism at home and abroad.

"Right now, I have friends serving in Iraq, onboard the USS Stennis and in Guam, and the work they are doing is incredibly important, not only for America but the entire

world. I fully support what they're doing," he said.

Halford, who cites San Diego as one of his favorite hangouts, said he became friends with many sailors and Marines from the nearby Navy bases and the sprawling Camp Pendleton.

"I've spent a lot of time in America and have several friends in the U.S. military all over the world," said Halford.

GIs have always been big fans and

"Right now, I have friends serving in Iraq, onboard the USS Stennis and in Guam, and the work they are doing is incredibly important, not only for America, but the entire world. I fully support what they're doing."

Rob Halford, Judas Priest singer

supporters of Judas Priest and Halford's three solo bands: Fight, Two and Halford.

"Everyone in the band supports all (the troops), and we sincerely wish them the best and a safe return home to their families," he said.

During the concert, Priest performed several other standout tracks, such as "Beyond the Realms of Death" and an acoustic version of "Diamonds and Rust." The highlight of the night came with the band's mesmerizing performance of "Vic-

tim of Changes" from the "Sad Wings of Destiny" album.

One German fan, who identified himself only as Stefan, had tears running down his cheek as The Metal God delivered a bone-crushing scream in the song's finale.

"I'm a grown man, 36 years old, but that brought tears to my eyes," he said after the show. "They hit every note. ... Halford is just amazing."

Servicemen in Europe and Japan will have a chance to catch the metal legends. Starting Wednesday, Judas Priest rolls through the United Kingdom for 11 shows.

From there, Priest will make stops in Holland, Germany, Poland, Austria, Italy, Portugal and will wrap up the European leg on April 17 with three dates in Spain. After 18. Plans are under way for a North American summer tour.

For information on tour dates, locations and tickets, see www.judaspriest.com and concert listings in Sunday's Stars and Stripes Scene magazine. For lively metal discussion, check out The Metal God's Quorum message board at www.robhalford.com

E-mail Ray Conway at: conwayr@mail.strips.osd.mil

YOUR MONEY

Lamaker: Veterans aren't equal

VA chairman says new generation comes with new health care needs

Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., the new chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, says the medical and rehabilitation needs of a new generation of war veterans leave him more certain than ever that Congress erred in 1996 when it opened VA health care to any veteran willing to pay modest fees.

"While some veterans' organizations like to create a theme, that 'a veteran is a veteran' [and] there is no difference, I disagree," said Buyer (pronounced boo-yeer).

A decade ago, in the wake of a Persian Gulf War that saw relatively few U.S. casualties, the Department of Veterans Affairs went back to worrying about an aging patient population and underserved VA clinics and hospitals, Buyer said. Those concerns, along with wishful thinking about the VA billing employer-provided insurance plans for the cost of care, led Congress to open VA facilities to veterans neither poor nor disabled.

Time has shown that to be a mistake, Buyer said. Today, the VA has \$3 billion in "uncollected debt" for health care rendered that insurance companies have not paid.

"And we find ourselves now in protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the war on terror all over the world. So the sense from 1996 that we could open up the VA to protect the bricks and mortar because of a declining population of veterans," Buyer said, is replaced by "the reality that we have more veterans now that have to come into the system."

Buyer's comments came in an interview for this column days after his committee voted to impose an enrollment fee of \$230 to \$500 a year on 2.4 million veterans in priority categories 7 and 8 — those who are not poor and have no service-connected disability.

In January, Republican leaders removed Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., as committee chairman for being too close to veterans groups, too supportive of expanding benefits and too dismissive of Bush administration plans to slow VA spending and impose fees on low-priority veterans.

New chairman Buyer, 46, is a blunt-spoken attorney and Citadel graduate who was deployed in the first Gulf War as an Army Reserve lawyer. With oversight responsibility now for the second-largest department in government, Buyer said he has three short-term priorities.

■ **Re-focus VA health care on its "core constituency"** of service-disabled, indigent and special-needs veterans.

■ **Develop a "seamless transition" process** for veterans moving from active duty to VA care. So far more than 1 million have been wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan and as many as 100,000 could have post-traumatic stress disorder, Buyer said. "The VA needs to prepare to receive them."

■ **Improve VA rehabilitation and vocational training** to ensure that even the most severely injured veterans return to rewarding lives.

"For a lot of years," Buyers said, "it was,

'Here's your check. Good luck in your life. And if you find it in a bottle, we'll try to get you in a program.' I want the system to be far more personal."

Buyer also said he expects a new bipartisan Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission, which will hold its first meeting soon, to review whether Congress went too far on allowing concurrent receipt of military retirement and VA disability payments. Buyer said that as chairman of the House subcommittee on military personnel a few years ago, he "fought \$25 million" to lift the concurrent receipt ban only for 100 percent, combat-disabled retirees.

"Little did I realize that my care and concern would be so enveloped" by politics, he said, and the ban quickly lifted to benefit a few hundred thousand retirees, many having no combat-related disability.

Buyer also expects the commission to consider whether to change the way disability ratings are set or to tighten the definition of "service-connected" injuries or ailments.

"There is something bothersome in the system where you can have a soldier blow out his knee from a roadside bomb and end up with a disability that's the same as a guy who blew out his knee sliding into home plate at church league softball on Sunday," said Buyer. "Is that the type of disability system that is just and fair?"

To comment, write Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centerville, VA 20120-1111, e-mail mlupdate@aol.com or visit www.militaryupdate.com

ID theft protection

WASHINGTON — Amid rising anger over thefts of personal data, lawmakers Tuesday urged limits on the sale of Social Security numbers and other confidential information. "I personally see no socially redeeming value in anyone having the right to market or use Social Security numbers and other personal information without my approval," said Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, in a written statement.

Congress has considered banning the sale of Social Security numbers before, but legislators are now rallying around the idea in the wake of a series of security breaches that gave identity thieves access to restricted information kept by data brokers ChoicePoint Inc. and LexisNexis.

ChoicePoint Chief Executive Derek Smith, making his first appearance before lawmakers since the scandal erupted last month, had been released informally that some regulation may be needed. Smith said he would support, for example, "a single, reasonable, nationwide mandatory notification requirement" under which companies would tell consumers when their data had been released informally.

But Smith and LexisNexis President Kurt P. Sanford resisted the idea of a ban on the sale of Social Security numbers. Sanford pointed out that the numbers can help banks verify that transactions are legitimate and help debt collectors verify that they are dealing with the right person.

From wire reports

TUESDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES				
52-week	High	Low	Close	% Chg
Dow Jones Industrial	10,854.48	10,801.40	10,854.48	+0.51
S&P 500	1,409.97	1,404.46	1,409.97	+0.36
NASDAQ	2,532.77	2,518.74	2,532.77	+0.54
Dow Jones Utilities	7,455.86	7,421.33	7,455.86	+0.46
NYSE Composite	1,539.14	1,534.74	1,539.14	+0.28
Nasdaq Composite	2,532.77	2,518.74	2,532.77	+0.54
S&P 500	1,409.97	1,404.46	1,409.97	+0.36
Dow Jones	10,854.48	10,801.40	10,854.48	+0.51
NYSE	1,539.14	1,534.74	1,539.14	+0.28
NASDAQ	2,532.77	2,518.74	2,532.77	+0.54

NYSE					AMEX					NASDAQ				
MOST ACTIVE (\$1 OR MORE)					MOST ACTIVE (\$1 OR MORE)					MOST ACTIVE (\$1 OR MORE)				
Name	Vol	(\$)	Last	Chg	Name	Vol	(\$)	Last	Chg	Name	Vol	(\$)	Last	Chg
Local	35,369	2.50		+1.01	SPDR	35,369	22.14		+1.01	Microsoft	64,524	32.24		+1.17
United	10,854	61.06		+0.51	S&P 500	17,837	33.63		+0.81	Microsoft	59,170	31.11		+0.82
Dow	27,793	1.44		+0.36	SPDR	19,930	41.11		+1.11	Microsoft	55,915	4.99		+0.86
Telecom	21,337	17.61		+0.46	S&P 500	17,837	33.63		+0.81	Microsoft	55,915	4.99		+0.86
Commodity	24,531	11.17		+0.54	SP Fnd	8334	29.85		+1.01	Sinara	42,877	3.33		+0.83
Energy	19,922	11.38		+0.28	S&P 500	7,282	61.06		+0.51	Sinara	42,877	3.33		+0.83
Health	17,361	29.75		+0.51	S&P 500	6,700	25.82		+0.81	Coco	40,358	15.46		+0.89
Oil	17,361	29.75		+0.51	S&P 500	6,700	25.82		+0.81	Coco	40,358	15.46		+0.89
Gold	17,361	29.75		+0.51	S&P 500	6,700	25.82		+0.81	Coco	40,358	15.46		+0.89
U.S. Treasuries	17,361	29.75		+0.51	S&P 500	6,700	25.82		+0.81	Coco	40,358	15.46		+0.89
U.S. Treasuries	17,361	29.75		+0.51	S&P 500	6,700	25.82		+0.81	Coco	40,358	15.46		+0.89
EMC Corp	15,233	12.44		+1.13	MadCatz Corp	37,951	1.64		+0.81	Oracle	29,966	13.15		+0.96
Genentech's	15,233	10.50		+0.92	MadCatz Corp	34,080	1.10		+0.81	CMSI	23,920	1.81		+0.81

KEY DEFENSE STOCKS				
Name	High	Low	Close	% Chg
Alliant Techsystems	10.17	12.29	12.29	+10.8
Airbus	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
Boeing	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
General Dynamics	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
Huntington	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
Lockheed Martin	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
Northrop	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
Raytheon	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
Rockwell	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
Teledyne	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
United Technologies	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4
United Technologies	1.00	11.42	11.42	+11.4

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs	\$1.3774
Dollar buys	0.7260
British pound	0.6700
Japanese yen (March 17)	107.00
South Korean won (March 16)	122.60
Commercial rates	
Bahrian (Dinar)	\$1.7127
Bahraini (Dinar)	\$1.7127
Canada (Dollar)	1.2095
Denmark (Krone)	6.5596
Egypt (Pound)	\$1.3140/4.7511
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7995
Hungary (Forint)	164.15
Iceland (Krona)	96.985
Ireland (Euro)	0.7876
Japan (Yen)	106.45
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2029
Norway (Krone)	5.77
Philippines (Peso)	53.91
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.98
Singapore (Dollar)	1.0027
South Korea (Won)	1,000.80
Switzerland (Franc)	1.1091
Thailand (Baht)	36.45
Turkey (New Lira)	1.80
(Military exchange rates are those published by the U.S. military, based on facilities in the country of issuance dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is Netherlands and the United Kingdom.)	
(U.S. purchasing British pounds in Germany, the U.S. military has no exchange facility. Commercial rates are inter-bank rates provided for reference when buying currencies. All figures are for one dollar to the pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is	

KEY MUTUAL FUNDS				
Name	High	Low	Close	% Chg
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6
Fidelity Invest. Global	37.95	37.95	+0.21	+0.6

Present, accounted for

Presenting well in public is an important skill many of us overlook as employees, says Eve Guernsey, CEO of JP Morgan Asset Management, Americas. She's sent along a few tips:

■ **Volunteer to do it.** Very few of us rush getting up and addressing large groups. We get nervous, it's one, etc. Do it anyway.

■ **Unleash or do it.** The ability to ef-

fectively present an idea to one client or 400 is the same. Be comfortable before either audience.

■ **Delivery.** For women, speak in a lower tone than normal to draw in the crowd and retain their attention.

■ **Take a course.** As public speaking can be improved. As your responsibilities in the company change, so should your presentation style, Guernsey said.

From The Associated Press

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

Resources for tax time

BY CHUCK MYERS
KRT

While more people turn to electronic tax filing, there are still some who prefer to go a more tactile route by consulting a tax guidebook. With every new tax-filing season comes a new line of books designed to aid taxpayers with the filing process and inform them of any tax code changes.

Here is a sampling of some of the new editions:

■ **"How to Pay Zero Taxes, 2005 edition,"** by Jeff A. Schnepper, (\$16.95) — compre-

hensive guide to tax breaks, tax code changes, deductions and tax planning.

■ **"J.K. Lasser's Your Income Taxes 2005,"** (\$16.95) — features include tax rules and deductions, filing strategies.

■ **"Taxes 2005 For Dummies,"** (\$16.95) — covers how to fill out forms, capital gains, deductions and planning for the new tax year.

■ **"The Ernst and Young Tax Guide 2005,"** (\$18.95) — is loaded with information on tax filing, retirement planning and education saving account contributions.



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with rain-showers. Highs in the 50s. Friday lows in the 40s.

Britain, Ireland: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the upper 50s to lower 60s. Friday lows in the 40s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 50s. Friday lows in the 30s.

France: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 60s. Friday lows in the 40s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Friday lows in the mid-30s to mid-40s.

Southern Germany: Partly cloudy with morning rainshowers. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Friday lows in the upper 30s to mid-40s.

Hungary: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 50s. Friday lows in the 40s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 60s. Friday lows in the lower 40s.

Southern Italy: Sunny. Highs in the lower 60s to lower 70s. Friday lows in the 40s.

Kosovo: Sunny. Highs in the upper 50s to mid-60s. Friday lows in the mid-30s.

Norway: Cloudy with rain and snow-showers. Highs in the mid-30s to mid-40s. Friday lows in the upper teens to upper 20s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-60s to lower 70s. Friday lows in the mid-40s to mid-50s, except upper 30s in Ireland.

Turkey: Sunny to partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-50s to mid-60s, upper 60s to the south. Friday lows in the upper 30s to mid-40s, except lower 30s in Istanbul.

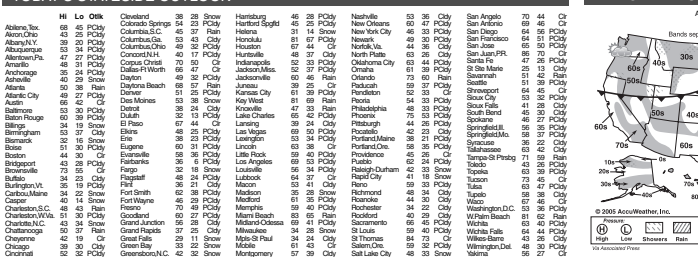
For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at:
<https://ows.sembach.af.mil>
<http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil>

KEY: Sunny Pt. cly. Mostly cly. Cloudy Showers Storms Rain Rain/snow Snow Cold frnt. Warm frnt. Trough Occluded fr. Staty frnt. Low High

AFRICA MIDEAST



TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK THE UNITED STATES TODAY



Scheduled for ETS or PCS?

Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS AND STRIPES
Your HomeTown Newspaper

Horoscope

In his efforts to bring Christianity to the Irish people, St. Patrick, for whom this day is celebrated, was known to have incorporated Irish rituals into his teachings. One result is the Celtic cross, Patrick's melding of the sun, exalted by the Irish, and the Christian cross. In keeping with the holiday, Irish innovative and familiar ways to communicate.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(March 17). You turn into a high-powered magnet, attracting just what you need.

The trick is deciding that you need beautiful people, things and situations in your life! Career shifts this spring help facilitate personal changes. Your family finally accepts an aspect of you in June. Aries and Taurus give you adventure, but romance with a sweet Scorpio intrigues.

ARIES (March 21-April 19).

Once you start a project, dynamic people start to join. Keeping these goals interested requires that you give them their "props" for what they add to the mix. Become a compliment-spewing machine.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20).

Release — even if it means letting out a blood-curdling primal scream! Bottled-up energy is eventually detrimental. Too much time in a windowless room is bad for your soul. Find your patch of open sky to stretch out under.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). A rare encounter is featured. You're face to face with the qualities you appreciate but seldom experience: stillness, tranquility, surrender. Are you strong enough to give in? There's nothing to lose but your own baggage.

CANCER (June 22-July 22).

Something you were unable to accomplish yesterday is now quite doable. All you need is the guts to try again. With more than your usual exuberance, you can convince a VIP to join your team.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).

You're like a cat playing with string. You consciously know that nothing will

come of the activity. This string is not match for you and will never be conquered or killed in the end. But isn't the exercise fun?

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Return to your childhood fantasy. It's more plausible than ever now. In fact, all possible scenarios are possible today, for no other reason than this: You are choosing to see problems as opportunities.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

The demands that are made of you are tedious, mental and, quite frankly, beneath you. (You're not a robot!) However, it's your attitude that can transform a boring task into a Zen exercise.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).

When you're with that person who makes your heart beat faster, the whole world looks different. There's a magical cast to the scene, as if you're seeing things through colored glass under a smiling sun.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

Confidence will attract money to you — or at least attract people who have money. You have the guts to greet anyone as though you know that you're someone worth knowing and knowing well.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

Notions once deemed unsafe or impractical now get another look. You're not as concerned about security as you once were, which makes it possible to explore new business options. Maybe you'll dream up an idea for a movie.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

The situation calls for you to get along with everybody. Everybody. Even the person you have nothing in common with, aside from the fact that you are both carbon-based life forms.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

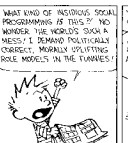
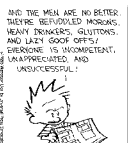
You'll run into the vain, gluttonous and misguided. The natural tendency is to consider yourself superior, but this gets you nowhere. Instead, use the scenario as an opportunity for you to practice humility.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



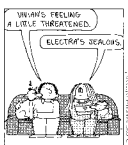
Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red Rover



Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



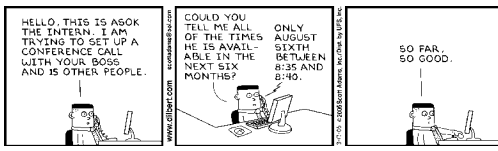
Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



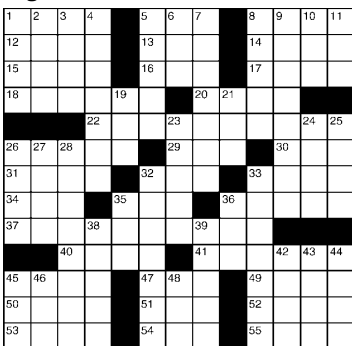
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Detail, for short
5 8-Across, for one
8 Nora's pet
12 Argonauts' patron
13 Mess up
14 Transaction
15 On
16 Speedwagon letters
17 Genie's hideout
18 Craving
20 "Yeah, right!"
22 Surprised
26 Knee counterpart
29 Irritate
30 Director Howard
31 It's good
32 for a breather
33 Train component
34 Showroom sample

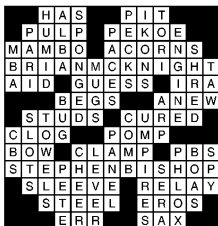
Down

- 1 Herring's kin
2 Fountain of music
3 Piccadilly statue
4 House of representatives?
5 "10" star
6 Refrainable rock
7 Bad pun
8 Extemporize
9 Mariner
10 Highland chapeau
11 Mont Blanc, e.g.
19 Like 6-Down
21 Kenny G's instrument
23 "Dynasty" actress
24 "It's Impossible" singer

25 Recognize

- 26 Early birds?
27 Dryer collection
28 Toronto team
32 Sled
33 Bureau
35 Doctrine
36 Big
38 Old hat
39 Fix firmly (Var.)
42 Siamese
43 Parliamentarian
44 Longings
45 "I — Camera"
46 You can't stand to have one
48 Guitar's kin

Answer to Previous Puzzle



3-17

CRYPTOQUIP

P XNHPN ON PV QLYNLTN
ANYLHPQENQ S JLLV, EN
QELFHA BNC PT CJLFXHN

V LJ NSONQAJLRRPTB
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF AN L.A. BASEBALL
PRO HAS A KNACK FOR SKETCHING PICTURES,
IS HE AN ARTFUL DODGER?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals R

Son lets girlfriend walk on him

Dear Abby: My 25-year-old son, "Mitch," and his live-in girlfriend, "Mimi," just became engaged, and I'm really worried. They met in college, where Mimi admits she went to "get her MRS."

Mitch took a job in another state and started working on his graduate degree, Mimi tagged along. At first she had her own apartment. But since she "couldn't afford" a car, Mitch drove her to and from work every day. Then she got a job where he worked, and they began having lunch together every day to the exclusion of co-workers.

Two years later, Mimi still has no car of her own in a state where cars are a necessity. In addition, she's "just so tired" after her "long" 7 1/2-hour day that she "just can't manage to cook," so they either go out or Mitch does the cooking, too.

Abby, my son is lean, outgoing,

into sports and martial arts. Mimi is obese and lethargic. She constantly complains about her aches and pains and other people. She has no hobbies and spends every night watching television.

I'm afraid this is somehow my fault. Mitch's mother was "high maintenance." I modeled caretaking for him in his early years when she and I were still married, but never to this extent. I'm desperate to have a father-son talk about the path Mitch seems to be heading down, but I also know I risk alienating him, maybe permanently. Should I keep my mouth shut, or what?

Panicked Pop in Pawtucket

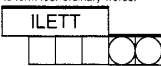
Talk to your son, but make absolutely sure that when you do, it is not perceived as an attack on his fiancée. Instead, discuss the mistakes you made during your marriage to Mitch's mother,

Dear Abby

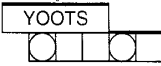


JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



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www.jumble.com

Ans: AT THE (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: GORGE FOCUS DECENT RAGLAN
Why the robbers headed for the seashore - THE COAST WAS "CLEAR"

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argiliron



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Allow wife's indirect input on mom

Dear Annie: My wife has a very good relationship with my mother.

Mom always has valued my wife's opinion and often asks her for advice.

Mom recently entered a nursing home, and there are decisions that must be made regarding her care and future. The problem is that my siblings feel my wife has no place in these discussions, including giving me her opinion. I've made it clear that my wife's place is to help me with her advice during these difficult times.

I do not want to create a rift, but I value my wife's views, and I feel that Mom would want her involved, given their close relationship.

I would like to think this is what marriage is all about - to act as a team in good times as well as bad. Am I on the right track here?

— Mom's Son

Dear Son: Yes and no. The

Annie's Mailbox



decisions about your mother's care should be made by her and her children, together.

If Mom wants your wife involved, she should say so to your siblings. If she is incapable of expressing this desire, your wife should not involve herself directly.

However, your siblings should not be telling you whose support and advice you can seek on your own.

Dear Annie: My wife and I, along with our three young children, just moved back to my home state. We have not yet found a home, so we are staying with my parents. My father is the problem.

Dad always has had a gruff, critical personality. On several occasions, he has yelled at my children for flimsy reasons, like not picking up the phone before the third ring, leaving the remote

control on the floor and not cleaning the hair out of the shower. All three of them are scared to be in a room alone with him.

Dad opened his home to us, and I don't feel it's my place to criticize his behavior.

— **Bark Is Worse Than His Bite**

In The Southeast USA

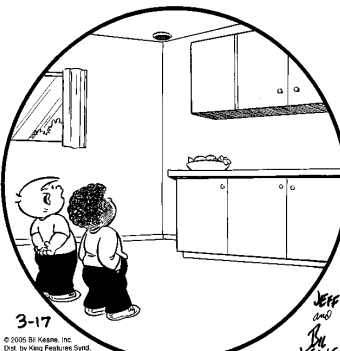
Dear Bark: Your father is unaccustomed to your presence, and he expects a certain amount of order in his home. There's no reason your children can't pick up the phone sooner, return the remote to its proper place and clean the hair out of the shower. However, the yelling is unnecessary.

Tell Dad he frightens the children when he raises his voice, and if he will ask more calmly, they will do their best to cooperate. Then tell your children to be respectful of Grandpa, and remind them that he isn't used to having children underfoot.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

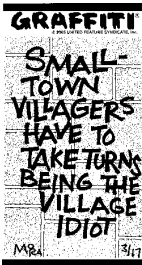
Family Circus



3-17

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One to Nine Feature Synd.
www.familycircus.com

"It's a smoke detector. It's for when my dad is cooking dinner."

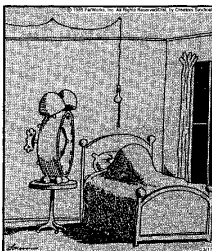


Dennis the Menace

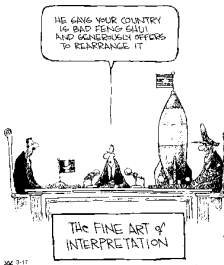


© Gary Larson

The Far Side



Non Sequitur



Quasimodo ends his day.

266-2117

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McGwire to comply, testify at hearing

BY RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mark McGwire plans to comply with a subpoena and attend Thursday's congressional hearing into steroid use in baseball, The Associated Press has learned.

McGwire's decision, revealed Wednesday by a representative of the former Oakland and St. Louis slugger who spoke on condition of anonymity, makes it likely all six subpoenaed players would attend the session on Capitol Hill.

Less than 24 hours before the start of the highly anticipated hearing, Jose Canseco's request for immunity was denied by the House Government Reform committee. Canseco's lawyer said the former All MVP will not be able to answer questions that would incriminate him.

"No witnesses have been or will be granted immunity," David Marin, a spokesman for committee chairman Rep. Tim Wirth, said in an e-mail to the AP.

Canseco's lawyer, Robert Saunooke, was angry with the decision.

"It begs the question as to what they're convening this hearing for," Saunooke said in a telephone interview. "They effectively cut the legs off from underneath us."

Canseco has said that without immunity, Canseco would invoke his Fifth Amendment right to refuse to answer questions.

"They told me we can't do the Fifth to every question," he said. "It's an absolute right of every citizen to not be compelled to give testimony against themselves. They do not make the decision. We do."

As an example of how immunity would limit Canseco, Saunooke brought up McGwire's repeated denials of steroid use.

"If he still holds to that lie, then the only way we can get around it is to give specific instances and talk openly and freely," Saunooke said. "If we can't do that, then our credibility is undermined."



New York Yankees designated hitter Jason Giambi was excused from Thursday's congressional hearing because of his involvement in the federal investigation into illegal steroid distribution.

Boston pitcher Curt Schilling said he will comply with the subpoena, and Chicago White Sox trainer Hern Schneider said that Frank Thomas left Tucson, Ariz., on Tuesday, would stop at his home in Las Vegas, then would travel to Washington. Sammy Sosa and Rafael Palmeiro were given off days Wednesday and Thursday by the Baltimore Orioles, a sign they would testify.

New York Yankees slugger Jason Giambi, who also was subpoenaed last week, was excused Tuesday from testifying because of his involvement in the continuing federal investigation into illegal steroid distribution.

"I would have done whatever they would have asked me to do and go from there," Giambi said Wednesday from the Yankees' training camp in Tampa, Fla. "They gave me an opportunity to focus on baseball so I appreciate that."

Baseball commissioner Bud Selig, union head Donald Fehr, baseball executive vice presidents Rob Manfred and Sandy Alderson and San Diego general manager Kevin Towers also will testify.

President Bush, the former Texas Rangers owner, refused to say whether the decision to subpoena players was an abuse of congressional power.

"I'm wise enough not to second-guess the intentions of the United States Congress," he said. "I do appreciate the public concern about the use of steroids in

sport, whether it be baseball or anywhere else, because I understand that when a professional athlete uses steroids, it sends terrible signals to youngsters."

Canseco, whose recent book accused several baseball stars of using steroids, submitted an opening statement to the committee in which he said, "I did not know that my revelations would reverberate in the halls of this chamber and in the hearts of so many."

Canseco's statement was first reported on the Web site of The Baltimore Sun, then obtained by the AP.

"I had hoped that what I experienced, when revealed, would give insight into a darker side of a game that I loved," he said, "that maybe it would force baseball to acknowledge it condoned this activity for the sole purpose of increasing revenue at the gate. Unfortunately, by my presence here today, it is clear that MLB is not interested in admitting the truth."

Canseco said he had endured criticism because of Major League Baseball.

"All of these attacks have been spurred on by an organization that holds itself above the law, an organization that chose to exploit its players for the increased revenue that lines its pockets and then sacrifice those same players to protect the web of secrecy that was hidden for so many years."

AP Sports Writers Howard Kendrick in Washington, David Ginsburg in Baltimore and Howard Uman in Fort Myers, Fla., contributed to this report

Giants given victory after lights go out

The Associated Press

This time, no one could say it was lights out just because San Francisco's Jason Schmidt was on a mound. After all, he gave up a run.

But the lights did go out after his work was finished Tuesday night. A power failure hit Scottsdale Stadium, and the Giants were declared 3-2 winners over the Milwaukee Brewers in the Arizona desert.

San Francisco's Brian Dalli-more was leading off the bottom of the eighth inning and Gary Glover was looking in for the sign — with a 1-2 count — when the power failed.

"It went dark right away," Dalli-more said. "I looked back and I couldn't see the fans, the catcher or the umpire."

Twilight lights came on within a minute, but the stadium never regained full illumination.

Earlier, Schmidt allowed his first run of the spring and insists he has yet to find his rhythm. He gave up a home run to Chad Moeller, snapping an eight-inning scoreless streak.

"There will be a stretch of four pitches where I felt I had it and then all of a sudden I didn't know what I was doing," Schmidt said. "I'm still out of sync."

Schmidt allowed two hits and walked three while striking out seven. He's given up four hits and has five strikeouts in 10 innings for a spring ERA of 0.90.

Blue Jays 2, Tigers 2 (10): At Lakeland, Fla., Gabe Gross hit his sixth homer and Josh Towers had his best outing of the spring for Toronto.

Gross, who will probably start the season at Triple-A Syracuse, hit a two-run homer in the first inning, is batting .500 with 11 RBIs.

Red Sox 6, Devil Rays 5: At St. Petersburg, Fla., Mark Bellhorn hit two RBI doubles and Bronson Arroyo had a solid start for Boston, which snapped a five-game losing streak.

Twins 2, Marlins (2) 2 (11): At Jupiter, Fla., Ismael Valdez allowed two runs in three innings in his spring training debut. Valdez, projected as Florida's No. 5 starter, missed two weeks because of a virus.

Louise 5, Orioles 4: At Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Chris Carpenter pitched four shutout innings and St. Louis overcame a poor outing by closer Jason Isringhausen.

Spring training

Nationals (ss) 4, Indians (ss) 3: At Viera, Fla., Livan Hernandez pitched six innings, allowing one run and three hits, and Cristian Guzman hit a two-run homer to lead Washington.

Mets 7, Indians (ss) 5: At Port St. Lucie, Fla., Carlos Beltran hit his third homer for New York and added a double. Doug Mientkiewicz had two more hits to raise his spring training average to .381. Backup catcher Ramon Castan hit a three-run shot.

Yankees (ss) 11, Marlins (ss) 5: At Tampa, Fla., Derek Jeter had three hits and four RBIs to help New York win its fourth straight. Mike Mussina allowed three runs — one earned — and six hits in four innings.

Mariners 11, Athletics 4: At Peoria, Ariz., Jamie Moyer allowed one hit in five innings for Seattle, which roughed up Barry Zito for six runs — four earned — in three innings.

Rangers (ss) 1, Rockies 0 (10): At Surprise, Ariz., Ricardo Rodriguez threw 4 1/3 shutout innings in his third spring start for Texas. Jason Jennings, Colorado's No. 2 starter, pitched four scoreless innings.

Cubs 6, Royals 1: At Mesa, Ariz., Corey Patterson hit a two-run single during a four-run fourth inning against reliever Chris George.

White Sox 8, Angels 5: At Tucson, Ariz., Vladimir Guerrero homered twice, the Angels, but Kevin Escobar struggled in his spring debut. Making his first appearance because of shoulder soreness, Escobar gave up three runs and six hits in two innings.

Astros 6, Nationals (ss) 5: At Kissimmee, Fla., Houston's Brandon Backe struck out six while allowing three runs in four innings. John Patterson, competing for the fifth spot in Washington's rotation, allowed seven hits and five runs in four innings.

Brewers (ss) 6, Rangers (ss) 4: At Phoenix, outfielder Brad Nelson sent to the bullpen earlier in the day, hit three-run, game-tying pinch homer off Ryan Buick in the Brewers' four-run rally in the fourth.

Schilling pessimistic about starting Boston opener

The Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Florida — Curt Schilling said he doesn't think there's a chance he'd start on Opening Day after being without Wednesday to Red Sox batters in a simulated game.

He threw 63 pitches before Boston's game against the St. Louis Cardinals and said he made progress. But time is running out since the Red Sox have two weeks left in the exhibition season and he hasn't pitched in a game.

Red Sox General Manager

Baseball briefs

Theo Epstein said it would be a surprise if Schilling pitched the opener on April 3 against the Yankees in New York. Manager Terry Francona didn't think it was realistic that he'd pitch then.

"If you do the math, I don't think so," Schilling said when asked if there's a chance he'll pitch in the opener, "but I haven't sat down and looked at the sched-

ule so, in my mind, I will pitch in the big leagues, hopefully, the day I'm ready to be activated if I have to start the season on the disabled list or whatever the scenario is."

The Red Sox have three days off in the first 10 days of the season and wouldn't need a fly starter in the first two weeks.

Schilling, who underwent surgery last November after pitching in the World Series on a temporarily repaired ankle, said the ankle isn't bothering him and he expects his next activity to be in a game.

Indians extend Wedge's deal

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — Cleveland signed manager Eric Wedge to a two-year contract extension on Wednesday, keeping him under contract with the Indians until 2007.

The extension includes a two-year club option through 2009.

"Eric has consistently demonstrated his strengths as a leader for our team and organization," general manager Mark Shapiro said.

Wedge, 37, led the youngest team in the American League in 2004 to an 80-82 record. After going 68-94 the previous year, the Indians had five players on the 2004 All-Star team and were winners in the first round of the AL Central on Aug. 15.

Bench coach Buddy Bell, hitting coach Eddie Murray, pitching coach Cal Kiner, third-base coach Joel Skinner, first-base coach Jeff D'Amico, bullpen coach Luis Isaac and bullpen assistant Dan Williams had their contracts or options extended through 2006.

Norway's Sorlie wins second Iditarod title

BY RACHEL D'ORO

The Associated Press

NOME, Alaska — Norway's Robert Sorlie won the Iditarod on Wednesday, overcoming insomnia and a dwindling dog team for his second win in only three tries.

Sorlie, a 47-year-old firefighter, crossed under the arch that serves as the finish line at 8:39 a.m., winning the 1,100-mile race across Alaska in nine days, 18 hours, 39 minutes and 31 seconds.

"It feels good," Sorlie said. "I am ready for breakfast."

Sorlie finished the race with eight dogs — half the number he started the race with, but the same number that took him to victory two years ago.

Sorlie is a three-time champion of Norway's premier long-distance sled dog race, the 600-mile Finnmarksløpet.

This year's run was only the third time Sorlie had made the 1,100-mile trip from Anchorage

to Nome, a town of 3,500 at the edge of the frozen Bering Sea. In his first showing, in 2002, he finished ninth, setting a rookie record. He won the race in 2003.

This time, Sorlie grabbed the lead early. The owner of a small kennel, he fended off a strong field that included seasoned veterans and five other Iditarod champions.

"I think this win is better than the 2003," he said. "This year, the dogs are better."

Sorlie is the second Iditarod winner born outside the United States and the second person who didn't make their home in Alaska to win. Doug Swingley of Lincoln, Mont., won four times and Martin Buser, a Swiss native who has lived in Alaska more than two decades, became a U.S. citizen after winning his fourth Iditarod in 2002.

For winning the 32nd Iditarod, Sorlie will receive \$72,066.7 and a pickup truck. Seventy-nine

huskers started this year's race, which has a purse of \$750,000. As of Wednesday morning, 66 mushers were still running.

Ed Iken, racing in his seventh Iditarod, finished second about 35 minutes behind Sorlie. His previous best finish was fifth in 2004.

The 2005 race was marked by unusually warm weather on much of the route, with wet, slushy snow and temperatures that can be uncomfortable for the dogs, which generally run best when it's 20 degrees below zero to 20 degrees above. A lack of a solid snow base also forced race officials to move the March 6 start from Wasilla to Willow.

Defending champion Mitch Seavey was racing in third place, followed by Ranny Brooks, who was runner-up in 2002 and 2003. Rookie Bjornar Andersen of Norway, Sorlie's nephew, was running in fifth place.

Legally blind Iditarod rookie Rachel Scuderi of Bend, Ore., was at the back of the pack.



Norwegian musher Robert Sorlie is only the second person born outside the U.S. to win the 1,100-mile Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Bengals sign RB Johnson to 5-year deal

The Associated Press

CINCINNATI — The Cincinnati Bengals signed running back Rudi Johnson to a five-year contract on Wednesday, a year after he set the team's season record for rushing yardage.

The contract replaces a one-year, \$6.3 million deal Johnson signed on March 7 after he was designated the team's franchise player on Feb. 15. Terms of the new contract weren't disclosed. He was paid \$1.8 million in 2004.

Sports briefs

Johnson set a Bengals record last season with 1,454 yards rushing.

"He has been a very productive player, as well as a winning player, for our football team. He's to be commended for his part in keeping the core of our offensive unit together," coach Marvin Lewis said.

Johnson joins three other key offensive players — quarterback Carson Palmer and wide receivers Chad Johnson and T.J. Houshmandzadeh — who are signed with the team through at least 2008.

Johnson's rushing total in 2004 broke the Bengals' record of 1,435 yards set by Corey Dillon in 2000. Johnson also had 361 carries in 2004, beating the mark of 340 Dillon posted in 2001.

Johnson tied the team record for 100-yard rushing games in a season with five and led the Bengals in touchdowns with 12.

Browns sign LB Stewart

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Browns signed free agent linebacker Matt Stewart to a three-year contract Tuesday, giving coach Romeo Crennel another option for his defensive scheme.

Stewart, 25, started every game last season for the Atlanta Falcons, finishing second on the team with 89 tackles. He also made seven starts in two postseason games.

Crennel is switching Cleveland's defensive scheme to a 3-4 this season, making linebackers an even more important commodity.

The 6-foot-3, 232-pound Stewart, a native of Columbus, Ohio, played outside linebacker for the Falcons last season.

The Browns also re-signed free agent linebacker Ben Taylor to a

one-year contract on Tuesday. He started eight games in 2003, and began last season as the club's starting weakside linebacker before hurting a chest muscle and undergoing surgery.

Gibbs pays visit to former No. 1 draft choice Brown

WASHINGTON — Joe Gibbs wasted no time before starting a pursuit of former No. 1 overall draft pick Courtney Brown.

Within hours after Browns' release by the Cleveland Browns to the Washington Redskins coach, Gibbs flew to Cleveland with defensive line coach Greg Blache and had dinner with Brown and Brown's wife Monday night, an official within the league told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The official said Brown is scheduled to travel to Redskins Park on Thursday, following a visit with the Denver Broncos.

Brown, the first overall choice in the 2000 draft, was cut by Cleveland because he would not renegotiate his contract. He would have been due a \$2.5 million roster bonus Tuesday. Browns General Manager Phil Savage said he still hoped the team could re-sign the oft-injured defensive end.

Patriots re-sign OT Ashworth

FOXBORO, Mass. — Offensive tackle Tom Ashworth, who missed the second half of last season and the playoffs with a back injury, re-signed Tuesday with the New England Patriots.

The 6-foot-6, 305-pound Ashworth started 13 regular-season games during the 2003 season and all three playoff games, including a 32-29 win over the Carolina Panthers in the Super Bowl.

He started the first six games last season before being placed on injured reserve with a back injury on Nov. 6. He has played in 23 games, with 19 starts.

Ashworth, 27, originally was

signed by San Francisco in April 2001 as an undrafted free agent out of Colorado. The Patriots signed him to their practice squad in September 2001 and he has been with the team since.

Most men's tourney teams failed to graduate 50 percent

ORLANDO, Fla. — A study says 42 of the 65 teams in the men's NCAA tournament graduated less than 50 percent of their players.

The graduation rate statistics, compiled in a study released Tuesday by the University of Central Florida, also found that women's teams in the NCAA tournament continue to graduate players at a much higher level. The numbers are based on athletes who entered the universities from 1994 to 1997 and were or were not able to graduate in six years.

If the NCAA's new academic reform plan was in place, the teams with less than 50 percent graduation rates would face penalties that include loss of scholarships and a ban on postseason play.

The NCAA has said penalties won't be issued until 2004-05 graduation data is included, which will happen in the 2005-06 academic year.

Kwan off to shaky start in figure skating championships

MOSCOW — Michelle Kwan got off to a shaky start in her return to international competition Wednesday with a dull and hesitant performance in the qualifying round in the World Figure Skating Championships.

The uninspired effort left the five-time world champion in fifth place in her group, trailing Irina Slutskaya, Furukawa Suguri, Carolyn Kostner and defending champion Shizuka Arakawa.

The placement means Kwan won't be part of the last-to-skate group of six in Thursday's short program, the first time she's been in a group of also-rans in more than a decade.

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A novel season nets rave reviews

Hawkeyes finish strong after dismissing their top scorer

By C. TRENT ROSECRANS
Cincinnati Post

His team lost, but Iowa basketball coach Steve Alford knew things would be OK following the Hawkeyes' 75-64 loss to Michigan State on Feb. 5.

Just three days after kicking his leading scorer, Pierre Pierce, off the team, the Hawkeyes came back from a 22-point deficit in the second half to get within three points with a minute left.

"We didn't give up," Alford said about that game. "That solidified it in our minds that we were going to respond the right way."

Iowa didn't win, but it was the way his team responded that gave the former Indiana point guard hope his team could overcome a soap-opera season and advance to where they are now, preparing for the first round of the NCAA tournament against Cincinnati on Thursday at Indianapolis.

Pierce, who led the Hawkeyes with 17.8 points per game, was dismissed from the team on Feb. 2 after an incident involving an ex-girlfriend at an Iowa City apartment complex on Jan. 27. Pierce pled not guilty to three felony charges and a misdemeanor on March 1.

A trial for the two counts of first-degree burglary and one count of assault with intent to commit sexual assault, as well as the misdemeanor count of fourth-degree criminal mischief, will likely begin in mid-May.

When dismissing Pierce, Alford said his star didn't take advantage of his second chance. Pierce was charged with third-degree sexual assault in 2002. He pleaded guilty to a lesser charge.

Despite what Alford felt was a positive response against the Spartans, the Hawkeyes lost five of their next six following Pierce's dismissal. Four of those five were against teams in the NCAA tournament — Michigan State, Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota.

"I thought playing those teams, even though they were losses, they proved to themselves things would be OK," Alford said.

The biggest surprise was that even after losing a player the caliber of Pierce, the Hawkeyes didn't change much schematically. The Hawkeyes are



Iowa basketball coach Steve Alford encourages his players after the Hawkeyes' victory last week over Michigan State in the Big Ten tournament, a result that gave an enormous boost to Iowa's NCAA hopes.

doing pretty much the same things they did with Pierce, only with Mike Henderson in the starting lineup instead.

The scoring load has shifted from Pierce to sophomore guard Adam Haluska. The Iowa State transfer is averaging 17.4 points a game since Pierce was dismissed. He was averaging 12.4 points before that.

Junior forward Greg Brunner has averaged 15.5 points per game following Pierce's dismissal and junior point guard Jeff Horner is averaging 15 points per game in the past 12.

"We had every reason to coast, but I've got to give credit to our guys," Alford said.

The key game for the turnaround, according to Alford, was a 78-56 victory at Penn State on Feb. 26.

"It may sound too simple, but it gave us a lot of confidence," Alford said.

Amid talk of Alford's job security, the win at Penn State was the start of a five-game winning streak that led the Hawkeyes from NIT preparations to the NCAA tournament bubble and the Big Ten tournament semifinals, where they fell to Wisconsin on a last-second shot.

It put the Hawkeyes in position to make the NCAA tournament, yet there were plenty of doubts as the team sat through the selection show on Sunday.

When Iowa was finally announced on the final bracket that was unveiled there was so much celebration there was little regard to whom the Hawkeyes would face and where they'd play.

"When all's said and done, it's how you handle things," Alford said. "In coaching, I learned from the players, there are good times, bad times and ugly times. If you're steadfast in what you believe in all three times, you'll be successful."

Iowa is in a state of hoops euphoria

By CHUCK SCHOFFNER
The Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — What a week to be a basketball fan in Iowa.

Iowa State, Iowa and Northern Iowa are getting ready to play in the men's NCAA tournament, the Iowa State women are in the NCAAAs and the boys' high school tournament is under way in Des Moines.

"Being a product of the state of Iowa, a product of Iowa high school basketball, to have it happen in the week of the boys' tournament, I can't imagine more excitement in the state of Iowa over basketball than there is today," Northern Iowa coach Greg McDermott said Monday.

Iowa (21-11) gets things started on Thursday afternoon against Cincinnati (24-7) in Indianapolis. Iowa State (18-11) plays Minnesota (21-10) on Friday afternoon in Charlotte, N.C., and Northern Iowa (21-10) takes on Wisconsin on Friday night in Oklahoma City.

"Obviously, it's terrific for the state," Iowa coach Steve Alford said. "Iowa State has had a great run. Northern Iowa has been solid all year. We had to play in both of those teams in the last four games in our building, so we have a lot of respect for both of those programs."

In the women's tournament, Iowa State (23-6) plays Utah (25-7) in Fresno, Calif., on Saturday night.

This is the first time the state has put three teams in the men's NCAA tournament. All three got in at at-large selections, which is especially noteworthy for Northern Iowa.

The Panthers had to win their

conference tournament to earn their two previous NCAA berths — last year and in 1990.

"It's somewhat unbelievable," said McDermott, who grew up in Cascade. "It's one thing to win a conference tournament. But when you think about the number of teams competing for those few at-large bids, it's hard to do. For us to be standing here as an at-large recipient, it's phenomenal."

McDermott thanked the two other state schools for helping make that happen. Iowa and Iowa State play Northern Iowa every year and that strengthens the Panthers' schedule. A game at Cincinnati early in the season also helped UNI's resume.

"We owe a debt of gratitude for Iowa State and Iowa," McDermott said. "Without their willingness to play us, we would not have a leg to stand on in competing for at-large bids."

It will be the first NCAA tournament for all the Iowa and Iowa State players. Both schools last played in the tournament in 2001.

"My goal, since I was a little kid, was to get to the point we're at right now," Iowa's Greg Brunner said.

Iowa State made the field in its second season under coach Wayne Morgan, who picked up the pieces from Larry Eustachy's messy departure in 2003. Morgan said he was confident this would happen.

"I don't know if I saw us in the NCAA two years later, but I saw us in the NCAA as we built the team," he said. "Our objective now is to get to the point where we take it almost for granted and get to the point where we can try to compete to win the thing."

Identity: Do you know me now?

IDENTITY, FROM BACK PAGE

Off the court, Copperrath is an unassuming personality from a small Vermont town. When an elementary school student asked him to speak to his class, Copperrath said yes. Then the child called him the day of the speech and said he couldn't come because his father, who was supposed to drive him, had to work. So Copperrath picked up the boy at his house and drove him there.

Fazekas, a 6-11 sophomore, was the WAC Player of the Year, averaging 21.8 points and 10.7 rebounds. Basketball junkies got a glimpse of how good he is when Nevada beat Vermont and Copperrath in a Bracket Busters matchup.

His nose was broken in the regular season finale at San Jose State and he'll continue to wear a protective mask in NCAA play.

"The mask is no big deal. I don't even know it is on my face anymore," Fazekas said.

Mendez is the top-scoring Canadian-born player in Division I history, passing the likes of NBA star Steve Nash. The Spanish-speaking native of Montreal, the MAAC player of the year, is the only player this season to rank in the top 10 in both scoring (23.6) and rebounding (10.5) in Division I.

In the MAAC championship game, Mendez,

scored 27 points and added 13 rebounds and earned tournament MVP honors.

"He'd start for anybody in our conference (the Big 12)," said Oklahoma coach Kelvin Sampson, whose Sooners drew Niagara in the opening round.

While playing for the Canadian National Team last summer, Mendez, who's 6-8, 245, went up against Yao Ming, the 7-6 Chinese star and Houston Rocket.

"He says he did OK," said Niagara coach Joe Mihalich. "Loughton and Turiaf also are foreign born. Loughton is from Perth, Australia, and Turiaf from Martinique."

Loughton, a 6-9 junior was the Colonial Athletic Association Player of the Year and averages 13.9 points and 8.1 rebounds. He had an impressive game in Old Dominion's overtime win over Virginia Commonwealth in the conference tournament championship game.

He's a throwback player, somebody who compensates for his lack of quickness with fundamental skills any coach would pass along to a clinic audience.

Turiaf, a 6-10, 249-pound senior, has a full beard and imposes himself on his opponents. Despite ankle problems, the West Coast Conference Player of the Year averages 16.1 points and 9.3 rebounds and blocks two shots per game.



Vernmont's Taylor Copperrath is a three-time conference player of the year who has NBA-type talent.



Johnny Mathies was the driving force in Creighton's Missouri Valley Conference tournament championship run, earning MVP honors.

All these mystery men have basketball pedigrees that few fans know about. That could change this weekend.

Men's NCAA tournament

OPENING ROUND

Tuesday, March 15
Oakland, Mich. vs. Alabama (A&M 69)
SYRACUSE REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 18
Charlotte (21-7) vs. North Carolina State (13-13)
Connecticut (22-7) vs. Central Florida (24-8)
Minnesota (21-10) vs. Iowa State (18-11)
North Carolina (27-4) vs. Oakland, Mich. (12-18)
Florida (23-7) vs. Ohio (21-10)
Wisconsin (22-7) vs. New Mexico (26-6)
Wisconsin (22-4) vs. Northern Iowa (21-10)
Kansas (23-6) vs. Bucknell (22-9)

Second Round

Sunday, March 20
Connecticut/Central Florida vs. Charlotte/North Carolina
North Carolina/Oakland, Mich. vs. Minnesota/Iowa State
Florida/Ohio vs. Villanova/New Mexico
Kansas/Bucknell vs. Wisconsin/Northern Iowa

Semifinals

Friday, March 25
North Carolina/Oakland, Mich. - Minnesota/Iowa State winner vs. Florida/Ohio - Villanova/New Mexico
Connecticut/Central Florida - Charlotte/North Carolina winner vs. Kansas/Bucknell - Wisconsin/Northern Iowa

Saturday, March 27

CHICAGO REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 17
Alabama (24-7) vs. Wisconsin-Milwaukee (24-5)
Duke (24-4) vs. College of William & Mary (25-8)
Texas (26-10) vs. Nevada (24-6)
Illinois (32-1) vs. Fairfield Dickinson (20-12)
Arizona (24-7) vs. Utah State (24-7)
Alabama-Birmingham (21-10) vs. (26-9)

Friday, March 18

Oakland State (24-6) vs. Southeastern Louisiana (24-6)
Southern Illinois (26-7) vs. Saint Mary's, Calif. (25-6)
Second Round
Saturday, March 19
Boston College/Pennsylvania vs. Alabama-Birmingham
Illinois/Fairfield Dickinson vs. Texas/Nevada
Arizona/Utah State vs. LSU/Alabama-Birmingham

Sunday, March 20

Oakland State/Southeastern Louisiana vs. Southern Illinois/Saint Mary's, Calif.

Semifinals

Thursday, March 24
Illinois/Fairfield Dickinson vs. Texas/Nevada vs. Boston College/Pennsylvania - Alabama-Birmingham
Oklahoma State/Southeastern Louisiana - Southern Illinois/Saint Mary's vs. Arizona/Utah State - LSU/Alabama-Birmingham

Saturday, March 26

AUSTIN REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 17
Kentucky (25-5) vs. Eastern Kentucky (22-8)
Kennesaw (24-7) vs. Iowa (21-11)
Oklahoma (24-7) vs. Niagara (20-9)
Utah (21-5) vs. Texas El Paso (21-7)
Friday, March 18
Syracuse (27-6) vs. Vermont (24-6)
Michigan State (22-6) vs. Old Dominion (26-5) vs. Delaware State (19-13)
Duke (19-13) vs. Mississippi State (22-10)

Second Round

Saturday, March 19
Kentucky/Eastern Kentucky vs. Cincinnati/Iowa
AT THE McKale Center
Tucson, Ariz.
Oklahoma/Niagara vs. Utah/Texas El Paso
Sunday, March 20
Syracuse/Vermont vs. Michigan State/Old Dominion
Duke/Delaware State vs. Stanford/Mississippi State

Semifinals

Friday, March 25
Duke/Delaware State - Stanford/Mississippi State vs. Syracuse/Vermont - Michigan State/Old Dominion winner
Kentucky/Eastern Kentucky - Cincinnati/Niagara vs. Oklahoma/Niagara - Utah/Texas El Paso

Saturday, March 27

ALBUQUERQUE REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 17
Wake Forest (26-5) vs. Chattanooga (24-6)
West Virginia (21-10) vs. Creighton (22-10)
Pacific (22-5) vs. Pittsburgh (20-9)
Washington (27-5) vs. Montana (18-12)
Gonzaga (24-5) vs. Winthrop (17-7)
Texas Tech (20-10) vs. UCLA (18-10)
Friday, March 18
Louisville (25-4) vs. Louisiana-Lafayette (22-6)
Georgia Tech (19-11) vs. George Washington (20-7)

Second Round

Saturday, March 19
Wake Forest/Chattanooga vs. West Virginia/Pittsburgh
Washington/Montana vs. Pacific/Pittsburgh
Gonzaga/Winthrop vs. Texas Tech/UCLA
Sunday, March 20
Louisville/Louisiana-Lafayette vs. Georgia Tech
Syracuse/Vermont vs. Michigan State/George Washington

Semifinals

Thursday, March 24
Washington/Montana vs. Pacific/Pittsburgh vs. Louisville/Louisiana-Lafayette - Georgia Tech
Syracuse/Vermont vs. Michigan State/George Washington vs. Wake Forest/Chattanooga - West Virginia/Pittsburgh

Saturday, March 26

AT THE McKale Center
Tucson, Ariz.
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Syracuse/Vermont vs. Michigan State/Old Dominion
Duke/Delaware State vs. Stanford/Mississippi State

Semifinals

Friday, March 25
Duke/Delaware State - Stanford/Mississippi State vs. Syracuse/Vermont - Michigan State/Old Dominion winner
Kentucky/Eastern Kentucky - Cincinnati/Niagara vs. Oklahoma/Niagara - Utah/Texas El Paso

Saturday, March 27

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Syracuse/Vermont vs. Michigan State/George Washington vs. Wake Forest/Chattanooga - West Virginia/Pittsburgh

Saturday, March 26

AT THE McKale Center
Tucson, Ariz.
Oklahoma/Niagara vs. Utah/Texas El Paso
Syracuse/Vermont vs. Michigan State/Old Dominion
Duke/Delaware State vs. Stanford/Mississippi State

Oakland continues surge — for now

Golden Grizzlies win play-in, earn right to face top-seeded Tar Heels

BY RUSTY MILLER

The Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Oakland can still finish the season with a winning record.

All the 13-18 Golden Grizzlies have to do is best top-seeded North Carolina on the Tar Heels' home court, and then pull off another five upsets during the next three weeks.

"If we win the national championship, we'll finally get to 19-18," coach Greg Kampe said with a laugh.

The Golden Grizzlies took the first step Tuesday night at the University of Dayton, beating Alabama A&M 79-69 in the NCAA opening-round game behind Rawle Marshall's 29 points and Courtney Scott's 21.

Oakland (13-18) was its sixth straight, including three upsets in as many days last week by a combined seven points to take the Mid-Continent Conference title and earn a berth in the field of 65.

"There was a whole lot of adversity during the season," said Brandon Cassie, who added 13 points. "It brought us together. That's why we've played so well in these do-or-die games."

The turnaround is almost incomprehensible for a team that was 7-18 and riding a three-game skid 18 days earlier. Almost as incredible, Oakland opened the season 0-7, losing by an average of 13 points a game, against Illinois, Marquette, Xavier, Missouri, Texas A&M, Kansas State and Saint Louis.

The Golden Grizzlies became only the fifth team with a losing record to win an NCAA tournament game, joining Florida A&M (2004), UNC-Asheville (2003) and Siena (2002) — all at Dayton — and Bradley (1955).

Obie Trotter scored 24 points and Joseph Martin added 22 for Alabama A&M (18-14), the Southwestern Athletic Conference regular-season and tournament champion.

A&M coach L. Vann Pettaway said his team was worn out from playing four games in six days, winning the conference tournament Sunday before hitting the road less than 24 hours later to make it to Dayton.

"We want to get back to the big dance, but we want to dance when we're rested," he said. Both teams were making their first appearance in the NCAA tournament. Oakland made the jump from Division II to Division I in the 1997-98 season.

As the Golden Grizzlies stretched the lead to 21 points with 5 minutes left, the emboldened Oakland student section began chanting, "We want Tar Heels! We want Tar Heels!"

"This is surreal," Cassie said. "I can't believe it's all happening."

Marshall, a wiry 6-foot-7 senior swingman expected to be taken in the NBA Draft this spring, had nine rebounds and three assists.

His most dramatic play came in the opening half when he took a pass on the right elbow, pump-faked a defender off his feet and then sliced through the lane for a soaring dunk and foul. A crowd of 8,254 roared its approval.

The Golden Grizzlies closed 38-35 at the break, Oakland scored 16 of the first 18 points in the second half.



Oakland's Rawle Marshall (1) bumps chests with Pierre Dukes (3) during the NCAA opening-round game with Alabama A&M at Tuesday in Dayton, Ohio. Marshall led Oakland to a 79-69 win with 29 points.

Temple knocked out in Chaney's return

The Associated Press

BLACKSBURG, Va. — John Chaney was more amused by his welcome back to Cassell Coliseum than by anything he saw once the game started.

Making his return from a three-week suspension that has left his future uncertain, the Temple coach had an easier night than his team, which lost 60-50 to Virginia Tech in the first round of the NIT on Tuesday night.

"Wherever I go, I'm a lightning rod," Chaney said, smiling as he talked of being asked for autographs and booed by fans at Virginia Tech, a former Atlantic 10 rival of Chaney's Owls.

Zabian Dowdell scored 12 of his 16 points in the second half, six in a game-tied 8-0 run, and Virginia Tech cascaded to victory in its first postseason game in nine years, leaving Chaney disgusted with his team.

"We don't shoot the ball consistently and we haven't a year," said the 73-year-old Hall of Famer said.

"Our big guys cannot score if you sat them on top of the basket.

Men's NIT

We put them in and they don't rebound, either."

Talking basketball, Chaney was passionate. Asked about his future, his famous sunken eyes widened, and he quickly closed the conversation.

"I think I hear my mother calling me," he said when asked. "I'll be leaving you now if you have no more questions [about] my kids. That's the only reason I'm here — to talk about the team and the game."

Temple athletic director Bill Bradshaw said Monday that he, Chaney and others will get together once the season is over to talk about the future.

The subject of the game was no bargain either for the Owls (16-14), who were trying to give their coach his 500th victory at Temple, but led only until Virginia Tech sent a few free-pointers to fall in the first half.

Then the Hokies (16-13) gave the crowd of 7,416 plenty to cele-



Tuesday's loss was John Chaney's first game following a three-week suspension for sending in a player to commit hard fouls that left Saint Joseph's senior John Bryant with a broken arm.

brate.

"We just had to feel our way through the zone and a couple of guys stepped up," said Dowdell, who finished 3-for-9 on three-pointers.

Second-year coach Seth Green-

berg made sure his team knew of the Hokies' 1973 and 1995 NIT championships, and they seemed intent on adding to it.

"This is an opportunity. You don't build a championship program overnight. It's a process, and this is part of the process," he said.

The win was Virginia Tech's first against Temple in 10 tries. It was the fourth straight year Temple (16-14) has played in the NIT.

Holy Cross 78, Notre Dame 73: At South Bend, Ind., Kevin Hamilton scored a career-high 26 points, 11 during a 23-5 run in the Crusaders' (25-6) victory over the Fighting Irish (17-12).

South Carolina 69, Miami 67: At Columbia, S.C., Josh Gomer's driving basket with 2.1 seconds remaining lifted the Gamecocks (16-13) over the Hurricanes (16-13).

DePaul 75, Missouri 70: At Columbia, Mo., Drake Diener scored a career-high 30 points and tied his career best with seven three-pointers as the Blue Demons (20-10) defeated the Tigers (16-17).

Bubbling over with confidence

In a few weeks, Georgia Tech has transformed itself from disappointment to darling of NCAA tournament

BY PAUL NEWBERRY

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Isma'il Muhammad was trying to answer a reporter's question, but Will Bynum wouldn't let him.

Sitting nearby, Bynum kept poking fun at his teammate, distracting Muhammad so much that he finally gave up.

"I can't remember what I was trying to say," Muhammad said Tuesday, casting a look of mock disgust toward Bynum.

Yep, Georgia Tech is loose and feeling pretty good about itself heading into the NCAA tournament just a few weeks after being labeled one of the most disappointing teams in the country.

"You can see we've kind of got our swagger back," Muhammad said. "We played some good basketball at the end of the season."

Suddenly, the Yellow Jackets (19-11) are being touted as a team that could shock some folks in the NCAA tournament. After all, they've still got most of the same cast — Bynum, Muhammad, Jarrett Jack, Luke Schenscher, B.J. Elder — that starred in a surprising run to the championship game a year ago.

"We've got some people eating their words now," Muhammad said. "They wrote us off in the middle of the season when B.J. got hurt. Even when he came back, we didn't get right away. But the way we played in the ACC tournament showed we still have some fight left in us."

Georgia Tech, which went nearly two months without winning

two games in a row, was on the NCAA bubble heading into the final week of the regular season. For a team that began the season ranked third in the country, it was quite a letdown.

But the Yellow Jackets defeated Clemson in their regular-season finale, routed Virginia Tech to start the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament, then pulled off a stunning upset of North Carolina in the semifinals.

"You can see we've kind of got our swagger back. We played some good basketball at the end of the season."

Isma'il Muhammad

Georgia Tech forward

Not even a loss to Duke in the ACC championship game hurt the team's morale. The players were relaxed and joking around after Tuesday's practice, pleased to have earned a No. 5 seed with their strong finish.

The Yellow Jackets open the NCAA's Friday against Georgia Washington in Nashville, Tenn.

"Everybody's got a shot," Bynum said.

"It just takes a little bit of luck and timing. We're playing good at the right time, so we've got the timing part down."

Not that the Yellow Jackets don't have a few problems. Jack is hobbling on a sprained ankle, while Muhammad arrived for his interview session with a big pack of ice taped to his right knee.

Coach Paul Hewitt is confident that Jack — the team's most valuable player — will be ready to go by Friday, but the junior point guard sounds more concerned.

"If I feel like I can't go out there and contribute, I would be doing an injustice to the team by trying to play," he said.

"If I can't play to my normal capabilities, I'll tell coach to sit me down."

Muhammad didn't play at all in the ACC tournament, giving him a chance to rest his ailing knee. He plans to get it checked after Tuesday's game but is determined to finish his senior year on the court — not the sideline.

"I've got to tough it out," Muhammad said.

"Hopefully we've got three more weeks to go in the season. At this time of year, you just have to play through it. Pain doesn't matter anymore."

The Yellow Jackets won five thrilling games in last year's tournament. The largest margin was an eight-point win over Kansas in the regional final, a game that went to overtime.

"We don't think we played great in any game," Jack said.

"But we just kept getting the job done." Georgia Tech finally met its match in the championship game, losing to Connecticut 82-73, falling behind by as many as 25 in second half. Ever since, the Yellow



KRT

B.J. Elder (19-11) ranks second on Georgia Tech with a 13.0-point-per-game average. The Yellow Jackets (19-11), last year's national runner-up, won their regular-season finale and two games in the ACC tournament to break an 11-game streak of alternating wins and losses.

low Jackets have been longing for another chance to win it all.

Bynum even showed up Tuesday wearing a pullover with the 2004 Final Four logo.

"I've got to remind the media. I've got to remind everybody," he said.

"It gives you a little confidence when you're been there before."

"But a team like Georgia Washington has never been there. They are hungry. They want to upset us. That drives me more than last year's experience."

After a downer last week, Wake seeks to rise again



KRT

Wake Forest's Jamaal Levy (10) swings from the rim over teammate Eric Williams (31) the Demon Deacons' 81-65 loss last week to N.C. State in the ACC tournament.

BY AARON BEARD

The Associated Press

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Wake Forest played the entire season under the weight of lofty expectations from fans and its own high hopes.

Now, the Demon Deacons know it's time to live up to those goals.

The team many picked in November to win the national title opens NCAA tournament play Thursday in Cleveland. And the Demon Deacons need to put behind all the distractions of their 26-5 regular-season record from the short-attention-span defense and shaky shooting days to the low blow by their point guard that might have cost them a No. 1 seed.

Anything less than the Demon Deacons' usual high-scoring form could result in a disappointing end to what has been a successful season.

"If we want people to talk more about us, we're going to have to earn it and win games in the tournament," junior Justin Gray said Tuesday.

Heading into a game against 15th-seeded Chattanooga, Wake Forest has a chance to set a school record for wins in a season. A victory would also give the Demon Deacons at least one win in each of their past four NCAA appearances.

But this group is looking for much more.

The Demon Deacons reached the round of 16 last year, then returned every scholarship player to set the stage for the highest expectations in program history. They started the season ranked second, and even reached No. 1 in the polls for the first time.

Their 13 Atlantic Coast Conference wins tied a school record and gave them a second-place finish in the highly competitive league.

"I think our mind-set is very focused and, at the same time, very excited to play," junior Eric Williams said. "This had been a long time coming for us. We really couldn't wait to get to the tournament — not to overlook what we did during the season."

The question is whether the Demon Deacons are prepared for the pressure that will come with trying to reach only their second Final Four in school history — and whether they have put a tumultuous week behind them.

Less than two weeks ago, Wake Forest looked like a strong possibility for a No. 1 seed in the tournament. The Demon Deacons had played a tough nonconference schedule that included NCAA participants George Washington, Arizona, Illinois, Cincinnati, Texas and New Mexico to complement an ACC résumé that included wins against Duke and North Carolina.

But things changed in a 55-53 victory at North Carolina State in the season finale. Chris Paul hit a game-winning shot in the final second but was suspended for one game for hitting Julius Hodge in the groin.

That meant Paul was in street clothes when the Wolfpack and Demon Deacons met again Friday in the ACC tournament quarterfinals.

An inspired North Carolina State won 81-65.

Coach Skip Prosser said his team played tentatively in that game, possibly a result of the tense vibe between the clubs. He hopes his team has moved past that and closer to the aggressive, freewheeling style that made it so tough throughout the season.

Prosser said the team practiced with "great emotion" Monday, which he hopes means the players will react well to the pressure of playing as a high seed.

"We talk about being risk takers in the postseason, and so many teams have a tendency to play things close to the vest and play to not lose [NCAA games]," Prosser said. "The safest place for the ship is at the dock, but that's not what the ship's built for."

"We told them, 'We'll keep this real simple in the postseason. I want you to guard, rebound and play with emotion.' I want them to understand how special this is. You never know when you'll get back to the tournament."

Penn's Mark Zoller (24) has a shot blocked by Princeton's Luke Owings during the first half on March 8. The 13th-seeded Quakers are hoping to end an 11-year victory drought in the NCAA tournament when they play No. 4 seed Boston College in the first round on Thursday in Cleveland.

AP



Penn wants to enjoy experience

BY TIM PANACCIO

The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — Penn sophomore Steve Danley says he can appreciate how much Thursday's first-round NCAA tournament game against Boston College means to senior Tim Begley.

It has been more than a decade since Penn last won an NCAA tournament game. Begley was 11 when Penn defeated Nebraska, 90-80, in 1994.

Danley, a 6-foot-8 forward, understands that no senior wants to leave school without a tournament victory.

That's why Thursday's game in Cleveland is such a big deal. Boston College is the fourth seed, Penn 13th in the Chicago Regional.

"Maybe I am a little bit more aware of it than most guys," Danley said. "My senior year at DeMatha [High School] was a big disappointment. We were one of

the worst teams in DeMatha history and had a losing record for the first time in 30 years.

"It kind of makes me look at our guys at Penn. I saw the frustration with Jeff Schmitter and Adam Chubb last year when we didn't make the NAAs. At the same time, you see the joy on [Begley's] face going out there during Senior Night here. This game is the biggest thing in the world for some of these guys because they may not get to do this again."

Penn (20-8) last participated in the tournament in 2003. Begley is the lone Quakers starter who played in a loss to Oklahoma State that season.

"You look at it as your last time around, and maybe it is a little more meaningful," Begley said. "Anytime you go to the NAAs, pretty much the whole country is watching. It's a lot more meaningful than any game you play all season. You treat it differently, prepare differently, and realize the impact any game can have."

Begley, a 6-8 guard, said he remembers how close the Quakers were in the loss to Oklahoma State (77-63) and also in 2002, when they fell, 82-75, to California.

Because so many Penn players weren't around two years ago, there is virtually nothing for this year's team to draw upon in terms of playoff experience. Boston College (24-4) is making its fourth tournament appearance in five years. The Eagles are a veteran team.

"Against Oklahoma State, we were down two or three points late in the game," Begley said. "In a game like that, you want to hang around and give yourself a shot down the stretch. If we can make shots early against BC, get our confidence going, get off to a good start, we could be in good shape."

Boston College has been a bit of an enigma. The Eagles ripped off a school-record 20 straight victories to start the season while ascending to No. 3 in the polls. But they fell back to earth, and finished the season losing three of their last five games. In the Quakers' eyes, the Eagles' recent slump inspires thoughts of an upset.

"Them losing the last few games kind of hurts us more than anything because they will be all fired up," Begley said.

The Eagles have a height advantage. Junior forward Craig Smith and sophomore forward Jared Dudley are both 6-7. Senior center Nate Doornekamp is a 7-foot-er.

Which is why the Quakers are going to need Eric Omsundson healthy on Thursday. The 6-5 senior guard has been bothered for weeks by a virus that caused him to lose 10 pounds. Omsundson, down to 190, practiced on Tuesday.

Begley said he has talked to Penn's younger players about what to expect in Cleveland and about enjoying the moment.

"This is a chance of a lifetime for guys like myself," Begley said. "We are not going to be playing in the NBA for 10 years. So all this media coverage is pretty cool for us. I hope our guys get to enjoy because it is a different experience, something different than they will ever have."

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SPORTS

Creating an identity

Unknowns can make name for themselves in NCAA

BY JOHN ROWE

The Record (Bergen County, N.J.)

Chances are you haven't heard of Johnny Mathies.

No, he isn't the singer who spells his name without the "e."

Mathies is a 6-foot guard at Creighton, one of many NCAA tournament players who until now have been household names only in their own households. That could change before this weekend is over.

The playing field is finally somewhat level for the Mathieses of college basketball. J.J. Redick of Duke and Chris Paul of Wake Forest are no longer images on a television screen. They are opponents.

Could there be another Mouse McFadden, the dynamic Cleveland State guard of the mid-1980s, or Bryce Drew of Valparaiso, who made a game-winning three-pointer in 1998, in this tournament's group of quality but virtually unknown players?

There are plenty of candidates from which to choose. From guards such as Mathies, Ed McCants of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Tim Begley of Penn, to big men like Taylor Coppenrath of Vermont, Nick Fazekas of Nevada, Juan Mendez of Niagara, Alex Loughton of Old Dominion and Ronny Turiaf of Gonzaga.

Mathies has underdog written all over him. Despite his size, the junior speedster from Louisville, Ky., is a shooting guard.

After one season at Dixie Junior College in Utah, Mathies joined Creighton in 2003-04, averaging 7.8 points and 1.8 assists. This season he's improved to 11.6 points and 2.2 assists for a team that makes nine three-pointers per game.

Mathies came up big in the Missouri Valley tournament, being selected MVP even though he didn't make any all-conference team.

With a junior-college background, McCants, a 6-3 senior, has a shooter's mentality. He averages 17.4 points and scored a career-high 38 against Detroit and

makes 37 percent of his three-point tries. He hit four threes in the Horizon League championship game.

Begley, the Ivy League Player of the Year, is a big guard (6-6), with an outside game. He is averaging 13.7 points, 5.4 rebounds and 4.8 assists a game. He can be a defensive nightmare for a team with a small backcourt.

Coppenrath is the three-time America East Player of the Year who has helped the Catamounts advance to three straight NCAA tournaments. At 6-9, 257 pounds, he has an NBA-like body and a game that has some scouts comparing him to Dirk Nowitzki. He's averaging 25.7 points and 8.9 rebounds and shooting 53.6 percent from the field.

Last year, Connecticut's Emeka Okafor helped limit Coppenrath, the nation's third-leading scorer at 24.7 points per game, to 12 points on 3-for-17 shooting.

SEE UNKNOWN ON PAGE 28



Wisconsin-Milwaukee guard Ed McCants averages 17.4 points a game and hits 37 percent of his three-point attempts. AP



Niagara's 6-8 Juan Mendez is the only player in Division I in the top 10 in both scoring (23.6) and rebounding (10.5) average this season. AP



Despite chipped bone in thumb, Iverson outplays Bryant in 76ers' win, Page 25



Oakland plays on after beating Alabama A&M

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Paul, Wake still reaching for lofty goals

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Adversity no hindrance for Hawkeyes

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Norwegian Sorlie wins second Iditarod in three attempts Page 27